

Five Arrows

of
Banda Singh Bahadur



Mohinder Paul Singh

"Five Arrows"
of
Banda Singh Bahadur

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Mohinder Paul Singh



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To My parents
Giani Man Singh Ji and mother Pooran Kaur Ji,
Family and Childran.

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Dedicated to,

On the solemn occasion of three hundred year
anniversary of the First Sikh State in 1710 A.D.,

Banda Singh Bahadur, the conqueror of Sarhind and his
companions, Khalsa warriors!

A Glimpse of 'Halemi Raj'

Sikh gurus, the enlightener-prophtes not only guided mankind to spiritul-ethical pinnacles, they also inspired their followers at large to passionately get involved in social affairs. In all round degradation, corruption, tyranny and pitch dark of ignorance, they lit the/lamp of divine knowedge, moral excellence and bold resistance to political cruelty. They put forward their own, rather divinely ordained, concept of Halemi Raj-the rule of love, humility and service. Historically speaking, Banda Singh Bahadur is the chosen one who blessed with Tenth Master's grace made this dream a reality.

After the conquest of Sarhind and subsequent establishment of the first Sikh State within Mughal India, he put into practice all the golden principles as enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture. There was full justice for everbody. & no religious bigotry at all. Banda Singh's coins and seal testify to this fact.

While celebrating as well as commemorating 300th anniversary of Banda's victory of Sarhind and setting up of First Sikh State, we shoud pledge ourselves to emulate the examplary careers of Banda Singh and his compions. Way back in 1980 A.D., Chife Khalsa Diwan began celebrating "Sikh Raj Day" to pay tribute to the great heros of Sikh History. Once again we salute all those saint-soldiers who lived and died for Guru's Panth. Dr. Mohinder Paul Singh of Canada, former editor of Khalsa Advocate. has done a great service by writing this book "Five Arrows", to the world wide Sikh community and mankind as a whole.

May Satguru Ji bless him with his grace and his "Five Arrows" success!

Bhag Singh Ankhi,
Hon. Secretary Chief Khalsa Diwan
Sri Amritsar.

Blessed "Five Arrows"!

Most people are born, live and die in ordinary way leaving nothing behind to remember them by. But some chosen ones come into this world with a mission and change the flow of history with thier extraordinary feats and achievements. Banda Singh Bahadur belongs to this pack who with Tenth Guru Gobind Singh Ji's touch and blessings made new inroads into world history. He lived by faith in Tenth master's divine mission and died like a true, dedicated Sikh. His horrible death in Delhi by the Mughal rulers paved the way of future generations of Sikh warriors and martyrs whom Sikh people remember in prayers all the time.

The founder of first Sikh state in Sarhind province also set standerds for future Sikh leaders and rulers as to how to behave and rule in accordance with Sikh principles enunciated by the gurus.

Today's leaders ought to learn from Banda Singh Bahadur the subtle art of ruling and rulership that must be committed to common welfare of one and all without discrimination. For the Sikh youth, Banda Bhadur serves as a role model and also for those who aspire to be leaders in public and society.

Whereas we all join the world wide Sikh communiey in celebrations of three hundrad anniversary of the conquest of Sarhind, I also congratulate my friend Dr. Mohinder Paul Singh of Canada, for writing "Five Arrows" an historic noval like his Koh-i-Noor before and wish him all success!

Prof. Hari Singh,
Former President.
All India Sikh Students Federation.

First Jathedar (Leader) of the Sikhs

The Sikh History is an endless tale of saints, martyrs and warriors. Banada Singh Bahadur is the first and foremost among them Chosen and blessed by the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Nander, Hazur Sahib in 1708 A.D. and renamed as Banada Singh Bahadur (Gurbakhsh Singh also), he proved to be a great and magnetic leader. he shook the Mughal Empire to its very roots. His victory of Sarhind in 1710 A.D. is a golden achievement and the sign of rising Khalsa wave in Hindustan.

After distroying the symbols of cruelty and injustice, he also rebuilt the ruined areas and founded the first Sikh State in Mugal Empire. It was based on equality, justice and harmony. Baba Banda Singh gave to the future Sikhs, royal coins and seal.

Five Arrows is a wonderfull title, very acurate and impressive. Sikh people of the whole world are celebrating Tricentenary of the first leader (Jathedar) of the Sikhs, his companions and their achievments with fondness and dedication.

Sher-i-Punjab Radio Networks Canada offers best wishes to Dr. Mohinder Paul Singh and prays for his sucess and happines!

Ajit Singh Badh
Dir. Sher-i-Punjab Radio, Canada.

FOREWORD

I consider it my proud privilege to write a few words on the historic novelette "Five Arrows of Banda Singh Bahadur" penned by Dr. Mohinder Paul Singh. I have known Dr. Singh for last 30 years or more, first as a journalist, then as a professor and a preacher of divinity and later as an exponent of the history of Punjab. Earlier too, Dr. Singh wrote an historical novel "Koh- i-Noor" which beautifully depicts the entire travelogue of this priceless gem as well as the glory of Sikh Empire. His present work highlights the exemplary struggle carried on by the disciples of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Baptised and enlightened by the divine grace of the Tenth Guru, Banda Bahadur stuck to the mission as laid down by his "Great Master". With his rare spiritual insight, unbending courage and valour, Banda Bahadur propagated the tenets of Sikhism with utmost sincerity, dignity and devotion. With a sense of deep dedication, religious tolerance, justice and equality for all, he laid down the very foundation of the Sikh State. His great sacrifice for the down trodden and men of soil has no parallel elsewhere in the world.

This year, Tricentenary of Banda Singh Bahadur is being celebrated and the release of this book on the auspicious occasion adds a feather to it. I wish all success for it!

DR. G S MANN Ph.D., D. Litt.
Ex Principal Govt College for Boys, Ludhiana
Member, Hindi Salahakar Samiti, Govt of India.

Preface

Banda Singh Bahadur flashed like a lightening rod across Mughal India's horizon. He struck the monument of tyranny and injustice with such a fury as to get one of the mightiest empires of the time stunned and whole mechanism of inhuman ruthlessness paralysed for a while. Leading brightly people's revolution, first of its kind, Banda Singh goes down in history as the first Sikh Generalissimo as well.

Picked up by Tenth Master himself, a young Rajput turned Madho Das-turned Banda Singh Bahadur was granted "**Five Arrows**", saffron flag, drum (Ngara), and blessed by him. Banda Bahadur became first temporal leader of the Sikhs after Guru period. With him Sikh history enters second phase. Whereas Gurus' battles were defensive in nature, Banda goes on offensive. An embodiment of faith and devotion; victory and freedom; bravery and sacrifice; he gave to the world first Sikh state, royal coins, stamp and seal, all signs and symbols of royalty and ruling power.

This book treats stately Banda Singh Bahadur, a creature of flesh and blood much as he lives in popular imagination. Therefore, controversial aspect has been honestly avoided. From tragic scene of deer hunting until his own extremely horrific death in Delhi, he moves like a colossus as Khalsa general throughout his theatre of activity in between Delhi and Lahore, almost entire southern Punjab - Haryana of nowadays and across Jamuna valley. He valiantly broke the myth of Mughal invincibility. Conquest of Sarhind, the crown city, is Banda's crowning achievement, of course. A yogi, a bairagi and a Sikh, all rolled into one, Banda Singh lived like a hero and died like a martyr, thus justifying his title "Bahadur" bestowed upon him by his mentor, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, The Lord of Khalsa.

Among several people, institutions and organisations that proved continuous source of inspiration for me, a few deserve my heartfelt gratitude. Cariboo Gursikh Temple Society Quesnel B.C., Sikh Society of Manitoba, Gurdwara

Kalghidhar Darbar, Winnipeg, Canada., Sikh Youth Association of Australia, Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, Gurdwara Guru Tegh Bahadur Southampton, U.K.

So do some well wishers like Raj S. Mann, Raghbir Singh Basati, Yadwinder Singh Nut, Mohinder Singh Takhar, Surinder Singh Morsara, Sukhdev Singh Sandhar and faintly of NMV Lumber, Ajit Singh Sahota, Jujhar Singh Dode, Harbhajan Singh Chauhan, Jay Minhas, Ranbir Singh Manj, Jaswant Singh Grewal, Jasmel Singh M.A. B.ed., Joginder Singh Giran M.A. (Canada), Thakur Singh Basati (U.S.A) as well as Principal G. S. Barara, Dr Ramesh Kumar Sharma, Jagjit Singh Dardi of Charhadi Kala Enterprise, Reference Library, Principal Prem Singh Bajaj of Punjabi Sahit Acadmy Ludhiana and many more.

As usual, my family and children both in India and Canada, provided me with safe, literary and warm haven in which to work. My wife Principal Tripat Kaur, as always, looked after the whole project with professional accuracy.

Above all, my granddaughter Aishmann Kaur Singh lent her own innocent charm to the book with her sweet interruptions. I am duly thankful to Lahore Books; Tajinder Bir Singh & Gurmannt Singh, my Publishers; Onkar Singh Dillay (Computer Work) who with keen sight for quality and publishing experience made this book see the light of day.

On the solemn occasion of 300th anniversary of the conquest of Sarhind, I most humbly offer this book as a tribute to Banda Singh Bahadur and his Khalsa warriors!

May the saffron flag hoist ever and aver.....!

April, Vaisakh-2011 A.D.

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Author's Publications:

1. Koh-i-Noor (historic novel)
2. The Sikhs In Canada-From Koma Gata Maru to Parliament Hill
3. A Radiant Journey-Baba Jwala Singh Harkhowal Wale.
4. A Great Soul – Baba Darshan Singh Kuli Wale. (Vol 1, Vol 2)
5. A Short History of Sikh Rajputs (Translation)
6. Five Arrows of Banda Singh Bahadur (historic novel)

Prologue (i)

From Bairaagito.....

The chase was on for quite a long time. It was a beautiful day and the forest was wrapped up in natural wonder. Trees, rolling hills and wild flowers, springs, and rivers filled with silvery waters intermittently snaking through the vale had all combined to render this piece of land into the paradise on earth. Young hunter irresistibly drawn to the enchanting beauty would come almost everyday to enjoy the scenic lore as well as for the fun of game.

Today, he came as usual and threw himself into the spell of the surroundings. The sun had come up the horizon and basked everything in shining white. Something moved somewhere close by. There was a stir & a rustle among the leaves. Startled abruptly, young hunter looked around and saw a deer at a distance strolling playfully by a spring. Young man's hands moved up to the bow and arrows. Before he shot, the deer alerted by instinct sprang out and making long jumps disappeared. The hunter forgot all magic he was absorbed in and made a sprint after the animal. It was quite a chase like that of sun and shade. Sometimes, deer would appear, hunter would dash before it vanished again. This hide and seek continued. The hunter, out of breath was sweating profusely. Perhaps so was the animal also. Both seemed to outplay each other. Before either could do anything, nature intervened and took its course. The deer slowed down and stopped to drink water. Hunter, in close pursuit, took a shot and the arrow pierced through deer's belly. The animal fell down on ground. The hunter, in thrill of excitement came closer and saw to his horror the poor creature in death throes. It was she-deer. She died along with its two unborn fawns right before his eyes. Wave of remorse came over. The young hunter threw away his arrows and vowed never to hunt again. He quit his home, the paradise of Kashmir and became a roaming hermit in search of inner peace.

Prologue (ii)

.....*Banda Bahadur*

Years later, hundreds of miles away in the south of India, in the midst of hypnotic landscape by the banks of Godawari, the sacred river, like Ganges, of the south, the solitude of the monastery suddenly got broken. Someone, in the company of a bevy of followers steps into the vast courtyard. The inmates all serene and sagacious in ochre robes get perturbed at the sight. The intruders, mounted on horses present an amazing sight.

"Who are you people?" the inmates ask.

"We are here to see His Imminence the Chief Custodian," came the answer.

"He is out on some important business."

"Very well, we wait for him. Pray! would you serve us food?"

"No, not until we are sure who you are and what is your motive."

"Alright", the newcomers said politely and looked around.

There were a few goats in a corner. They picked one or two and began cooking.

Meanwhile the chief got news and rushed back. What he saw outraged him. The dead animals and blood in his monastery!

"Who are you and why have you killed the animals- you have contaminated this sacred place with blood," he thundered.

"You know who we are- by the way goats' blood has contaminated this place. But the blood of countless innocent people being killed everyday all around you by the rulers does not bother you. Very strange...?"

The great mystic felt a wave of shock run through his body.

“Are You Guru Gobind Singh?”

“Yes.”

“Why have you come here?”

“To make you our own.”

“I am thine slave, My Lord!”¹

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1 The Chief, Madho Das fell at newcomer's feet. He was baptised and entitled Banda (Singh) Bahadur. Historians also say he was renamed as Gurbakhsh Singh.

Chapter 1

From Rajouri..... to..... The Banks Of Godawari..

This is Rajouri. A small town in the principality of Puncnh situated in the foothills of Shivalik range, of the celebrated Himalayas. It is sort of door to the valley of Kashmir from the northern border of Punjab. Richly endowed with natural bounties, inhabitants of the region are mostly Rajputs, hence name Rajouri. Rajput children, of course boys are traditionally supposed to be given to either soldiery or hunting or both depending upon the circumstances. Being hilly area, there are not big farms available. Besides farming is not considered as much as a profitable profession. Orchards, on the other hand yielding variety of fruits are much preferred and form a significant part of livelihood and state economy.

Like whole of Kashmir valley, Rajouri has seen continuous cycles of ups and downs of times. In ancient ages, this was the favourite spot for the seekers of solitude, intellectual marvels and spiritual mysteries. Rishis, pundits, sidhas, jogis and poets would undertake long journeys in order to be one with the mother nature and enjoy the spiritual union with the Master of the Nature, the Supreme Being. With the advent of Islamic hordes, the peaceful beauty of this paradise of the earth got shattered many a time. In the seventeenth century, Rajouri, Kashmir and its beautiful 'Dal Lake' were filled with the smell of blood that was being shed at the writ of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi. Mughal Governor of the valley, Sher Afghan took special delight in throwing pairs of Pundits tied up in ropes into the lake and see them drown helplessly. This was the punishment for all who refused to become Muslim. Rajouri also saw the dejected, helpless, listless faces of a deputation of Kashmiri Pundits pass through it on way to Anand Pur Sahib, to beseech Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur's help in the darkest hour of their existence. Rajputs felt the pain and agony but could

do nothing.

Young men in batches would roam all across the country land to bide time. Likewise pleasant climate of the region would attract wandering batches of saints, hermits and holy men. Young men would like to spend their spare time, if any freed from daily chores of household life, in the company of them. This would give them a pretext to reflect on what was going on around them as well as a sliver of peace for the time being.

One Rajput family, lived in Rajouri. The head of family owned a small plot of farming for subsistence. Although a Rajput he was not much keen for serving as a soldier in the army of local chief and was satisfied with whatever meagre income he would have from day and night's toil on fields. God fearing family was blessed with a son named Lachhman Das. The boy grew up to be of very strong physique and handsome looks. He helped his father in farming and other family affairs cheerily but his heart was captured by the magical beauty of jungle. He had had an in-born inclination of meditating upon things both visible and invisible. Sweet silence of mother nature occasionally interrupted by the chirpy songs of the birds and long jumping animals would send young man's mind into trance. Added to it was the excitement of hunting, which finally came to become his passion. He was also, like his peers, sometimes fascinated with the wandering hermits, 'the Bairaagis', who appeared to him the beings from another planet, the embodiment of peace and contentment. He would serve them with food, clothes and money if possible and at times talk to them about deeper issues. Fields, farms, hunting and company of the Bairagi hermits in the serenity of woods, Lachhman Das's life had assumed a fixed routine until one morning, Lachhman Das came to the forest as usual.....

When he tore apart dying deer's belly, what he saw horrified him. Two fawns, yet to be born, died before his eyes.

Young man came back home stultified and announced his decision to leave home forever. Parents, both father and

mother tried to pacify him with strong dose of love and wise counsel but to no avail. They also attempted to make him change his mind by painting before him the hardships in the path of renunciation, away from the warmth of family atmosphere and bustle of life. Every plea of affection & dread of loneliness in the unknown world proved like water slipping off hard stone. Nothing prevailed, One stormy night, Lachhman Das said good bye to his parents and casting a departing look on the four walls of the sweet home and saluting surroundings of Rajouri, the young Rajput boy stepped on a journey to an unknown destiny.

Days passed into nights. Weeks passed into months and months into years. Lachhman Das kept roaming, but the nightmare would not go away. His quest for peace, immediately after departure from home, brought him over to Janaki Das, head of a wandering batch of Bairagi Saints. Since his family was a Bairagi devotee, it was natural for him to seek refuge from emotional turmoil with the Bairagis. Janaki Das was a reputed saint, much respected among the religious circles for his austere way of meditation. One day, when Janaki Das surrounded by his disciples stayed in a grove of trees, Lachhman Das walked up to him and placed his forehead at his feet. Janaki Das placed his hand on his head and lifted his face up. It was a handsome face, stricken with grief though.

"May God, the Supreme Soul bless you with His Grace my son---what brings you here?"

"Your Holiness, I want to live at your feet. Please let me stay in your sagacious company." Lachhman Das implored.

"You seem to be a strong, handsome young man. These are the days for you to enjoy the luxuries of the world. Why would you like to choose the hardships of a recluse." Janaki Das tried to console him.

"We know many a young man disillusioned with worldly affairs or heart-broken somehow run away from problems at home and get tempted to run into the refuge of saints in jungles but as soon as they get acquainted with the hard and

rigorous ways of renunciation of the hermits, they lose heart and run back to the comforts of home and hearth. So," Janaki Das paused for a moment & casting a penetrating look on young man's face continued, "My son, whatever happened to you take it as a passing event and go back to your parents. They must be waiting for you."

"No Sire," Lachhman Das's voice was choked with emotion, "Please listen to my story. Then I will do as your Holiness would bid me to."

Janaki Das was not a stone hearted man. He simply wanted to guide the distraught man to right course for him. He knew quite well how many youth in fit of emotions, anger or despondency followed the same route with disappointing consequences. He did not want another young man seemingly of good grooming, currently on the verge of collapse do the same rut. But there was something in Lachhman Das's voice that affected a change in Janaki Das's demeanour and he agreed to lend a sympathetic ear to young Rajput's tale.

Lachhman Das began in sober tone but when he arrived at the point of killing the she-deer and her fawn, he broke down. Janaki Das was visibly moved & extended his hand on to sobbing young man's back. He allowed Lachhman Das to stay in his band. After a few days, Janaki Das summoned Lachhman Das to his presence and explained to him the fundamentals of Bairag, the principles of Bairagi Mandal and the code of conduct of a Bairagi, especially a hermit.

"Bairagi," Janaki Das addressed his audience "stands for non-involvement in worldly affairs. One who follows Bairag doctrine is supposed to be dispassionate in the realm of passions what this phenomenal world really is. It also calls for the total detachment from the attachment of 'Maya- the power of illusion', as Lord Krishna says th in 'Bhagwat Gita'. On the flip Side, a Bairagi ought to live in perpetual longing for the Supreme Soul. For this, no other craving but that of the beloved Master of the souls matters. A Bairagi hermit must go above the attractions of five instincts:- lust, anger,

greed, infatuation and ego. His lifestyle comprise complete austerities of body and mind. For Bairagi householders, the conditions aforesaid are however, not that much strict and there is room for flexibility in so far as one has to keep the needs and requirements of society and social life in view. By surrendering one's self totally to the Supreme Self, one can fully understand the meaning of Bairag and attain to the perfect state of Bairag. Such a one is true Bairagi, liberated from the cycle of birth & death forever", Janaki Das concluded his sermon with formal initiation of Lachhman Das to the Bairagi System. That night the new Bairagi had had good sleep after a long time, under the star-studded sky.

At the initiation ceremony, Lachhman Das was given new name 'Madho Das'. He would begin his day with Bairag manual that consisted of specific saffron mark on forehead, signs and imprints of Vaishnav School on his body and deep meditation. Every member of the band was surprised at how rapidly new recruit was getting deeper and deeper into the intricacies of Bairag i.e. Vaishnav thought. It was not long before Madho Das came to occupy a respectable position among the Bairagis and began to be treated reverentially. Following the dictates of Janaki Das's roving band, Madho Das went on pilgrimage to all the holy places of northern India especially Dwarka, the city of Lord Krishna more than once in a year.

Time rolled on. Madho Das's sojourns along with Janaki Das's followers brought him in contact with various groups of saints and hermits. He was intrigued as well as amazed as to how numerous sects however mutually hostile to each other, followed up almost the same routine of meditation and pilgrimage to the same shrines with mild alterations. They all were engaged in the single most quest—the quest for salvation and liberation from the cycle of birth and death and bliss of eternal life in heaven or merger with the Lord of Supreme Life. Madho Das would, on occasion, also be shocked to witness the polemics among them. During visits, he met some very real spiritual persons, some just

mediocres on the path of spiritual fulfilment and some worse than ordinary human beings. This afflicted his mind and he would go to the stillness of jungle, a source of calmness for his disturbed mind.

Bairagi Dera had liked this groove of mango trees and decided to stay longer there.

Life was going smoothly for Madho Das. He had completely broken with his past and had moved on to new start. As usual, after morning schedule of meditation he had come to his favourite spot, in a quite corner. His wandering eye caught up a strange sight. Some hunters hidden behind a bush were about to shoot their arrow at a deer grazing at a distance. "Do not shoot" Madho Das at once cried. Hunters got startled and missed the shot. They got furious and turned toward the caller in rage but were soon pacified as they saw a saint. His eyes red shot with anger. They could not look up at his face and took to heels. But the damage was done as if the hunter's missed arrow had pierced right through young hermit's heart.

Past memories came alive in a painful flash. Madho Das could not concentrate. His mind, so rigorously restrained in penance and meditation became a jumbled wreck. The horrible sight in Rajouri's jungle which he had tried so hard to forget, lurked before his eyes once again, rather in a forceful way. He walked back to his camp and participated in evening prayers. Apparently he was there but his mind was not. He partook of a little of food and quietly retired for the night. After night prayer, he closed his eyes and focused to let his mind slip into sleep. But the dream was so dreadful. He got up. Once more he tried to shake off the sickening feeling but could not. Whole night turned into a nightmare. Next day when he woke up, sun had come up on the horizon. Whole grove was lustrous. He felt ashamed and despondent due to lack of sleep.

"Madho Das, His Holiness calls for you!"

"What is the matter my son? You seem distraught."
Janaki Das asked a bit annoyed.

He was a very rigid kind of person and a stricter. His years long practise of Bairagi Mandal had made him more of rocky structure and less human. He would not condone any lapse, whatsoever, in his disciple's behest as regards complete observance of rituals. So much so, someone feeling sick or having fever or otherwise would have to comply with the Dera routine. "I have had a bad and restless night. Please forgive me." Madho Das recounted what had happened the previous day. For a moment Janaki Das appeared to be impressed but he lost no time in recomposing himself.

"Well, my son, it is but natural to feel compassion for the living beings, particularly in your case. Your past experience with such incident would suffice to touch your heart. But remember we are Bairagis. We are supposed to be unattached to any kind of emotions. World out there is full of violence and bloodshed. Precisely, therefore, we the Bairagis have chosen the path of non-violence and curb such tendencies in ourselves by hard practises. Anyhow, be careful in future and never ever skip daily routine of worship." Janaki Das tried to shore up new disciple's spirit. But the dream turned into nightmare. It became a recurrent dream. A shadow of dread hanged over him. Sleepless nights ended up into Madho Das's sort of regular absence from worship. Janaki Das was a man of shifting temper. When cool, nothing could perturb him. But when temper took better edge, his anger knew no bounds. This added further to Madho Das's mental anguish. One day, Janaki Das got so abusing that Madho Das, in spite of his co-disciples' soothing counsel, decided to say good-bye to Bairag Mandal & trace new and lonely path all by himself.

Now Madho Das was a rolling stone. He wandered from place to place in the company of some religious band or often at will free to go anywhere. Although he had detached from Janaki Das and his band, yet he remained faithful to Bairagi precepts and code of conduct. With Janaki Das he had pilgrimaged almost all holy shrines of northern India. Now moving like a freed man, he turned to the south after

crossing Vindhayachal range of mountains. All through his wandering, he had experienced several disciplines of mystic life and spiritual marvels. One, that attracted him most of all, was the mystery of Tantra system. Whereas other varieties of mysticism were driven to inner excellence and exaltation of mind to subtle heights of spiritual bliss, Tantra verged on, sort of magic, more or less. By following the rigorous practise, one could attain to mystic powers under the guidance of a proficient mentor. A Tantric, driven by the urge of goodness could help human beings in hour of helplessness, disease or bad-luck out to better hopeful prospects. Aughar Nath was such a one. Known for his Tantric mastery, Aughar Nath was much revered also by the saints, princes and commoners alike. But he was a difficult man not easy to please. He would seldom let anybody get nearer him. Madho Das was one among those few who had succeeded in gaining great Tantric's favour. He heard Aughar Nath's fame, came to him and beseeched his kindness. The old man looked into the earnest eyes of the supplicant. He was struck with the young hermit's handsome face. He readily took him as disciple and began teaching subtleties of Tantra.

Madho Das won Aughar Nath's heart with his dedication to learning the new craft. He served the old sage with son like obedience. Madho Das was an intelligent and sharp-witted learner. Most of all his faculty of concentration was exceptional. This was due to his prolonged stay with the Bairagis. He knew quite well how and when to shut his mind from all unwanted flights and to focus all attention on one, single objective. This subtle art of meditation proved quite helpful in so far as the intricacies of Tantra were concerned. It was heavenly blessing for Aughar Nath that he had found in Madho Das a deserving candidate whom he could teach all of his art & craft and who would succeed him in his monastery. Within the span of a few years, Madho Das achieved perfection in the practice of Tantra to his preceptor's jubilant satisfaction. Non-violence of Bairagis was already deeply engraved in Madho Das's soul. Now equipped

with Tantric powers, he found himself in a new world.

Aughar Khan, while imparting Tantra knowledge had also instructed him particularly to use Tantra for people's good. "A true saint is he who always remains absorbed in God's memory and a true Tantric uses the gift of Tantra for the welfare of others in the name of God, the Master of all art & knowledge." Madho Das took these words to heart. Aughar Nath soon afterwards died. Madho Das once again felt the pangs of separation and to console his broken heart, he once again left the comforts of monastery in search of new haven. His wanderings, brought him to the banks of Godawari river. The salubrious, scenic vista was too irresistible, Madho Das chose to stay there for rest of his life. His wanderings had come to an end.



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Chapter 2

This is Delhi

The capital of India situated by the banks of river Jamuna, has changed several names. Just like the subcontinent has been known by different names in different stages of history, the capital city has also been through different names. From Indus Valley civilization, this triangular piece of land joins the march of history. As the foreigners, Aryans, Greeks, Huns, Sakas, Mongols, Turks, Afghans, Iranians, Mughals and finally the British kept on pouring in, often, as invaders, it constantly kept on acquiring new names: Sapat Sindhu, Aryavrat, Brahamvrat, Bharat, Hindustan, India and once again Bharat. All these various names are also the milestones of its historic journey. In accordance with historic pattern, Delhi with its variety of names also witnessed history unfold in and around it.

During Mahan Bharat period, when Aryan civilization was at its peak, or perhaps one of very few of super powers of the day, it was famous as Indra Prastha i.e. the heavenly city after god Indra the king of paradise in Hindu mythology. With its riches, magnificent buildings all set in refreshing greenery watered by waves of Jamuna, Indra Prastha looked like a heavenly city indeed. When it changed from Indra Prastha to Delhi is shrouded in the mist of history. Popular myth among many is that there was a king named Dilip, all-powerful ruler of the four corners of India. He chose, so the story goes, this place as the pivotal point for his vast empire and gave his own name to the new city. Dili over time became Delhi. But story does not end up here. Delhi had yet to see many more ups and downs.

It is not that Delhi has always been Capital City of the country. During Mauriya and Gupta empires, Patli Putra (Patna of present days) & Ujjain in central region had also been capitals respectively. Kanishka of Kushan Empire chose Peshawar to serve as his capital. Nevertheless Delhi, on

Jamuna retained its charm & magnificence. Prithvi Raj Chauhan, once again after oblivion of centuries, gave Delhi its royal splendour, however, short-lived. A new storm from the western ranges of Hindu-kush & Sulemaan began to knock at the gateway. Muslim hordes of, first, Sultan Mahmood of Ghazni, followed by Muhammad Ghauri from Afghanistan came down invading India one after another. Prithvi Raj Chauhan's final defeat at Ghauri's hands decided the fate of Delhi for centuries to come. Qutab-ud-Din Aibbak, a slave of Muhammad Ghauri, became the first Muslim king-cum-vice-roy to rule from Delhi over his conquered regions of north Hindustan. Slaves, Khiljis, Tughlaks, Sayyads and finally Lodhis, all Patthan dynasties ruled in Delhi for almost 300 years until 1526 A.D., when Zaheer-ud-Din Babar defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in the battle of Panipat near Delhi & laid the foundation of great Mughal Empire. During all these years, Delhi was given several names. Daulatabaad, Jalalabaad, Tughlakabaad by its royal occupants. Mughals got fascinated with Agra another city on the banks of Jamuna, which like Lahore in Punjab became alternate capital city along with Delhi. With Shah Jahan, the famous builder of grand Taj Mahal succeeding to the throne, Delhi, now, renamed Shahjahanabaad, once again became the capital of Mughal India. Great Mughals began to rule India from equally magnificent Red Fort.

Shah Jahan spent his time alternately in Agra & Delhi. Aurangzeb, his son and successor made Delhi virtual capital of Mughal Empire on full operation. The occupants of Delhi present a diverse and colourful pack. There were some very capable, good-natured and worthy kings. Prithvi Raj Chauhan was a great king. Akbar the great Mughal stands out as one of the most shining stars among them who with his policy of justice, tolerance and common welfare won people's heart. Mughals gave to India splendid buildings, peace, prosperity, an appreciation of art and well mannered life-style. But with Aurangzeb everything changed. Assuming high sounding titles of Ghazi- fighter of faith, Abul-Muzzafar Alamgir

(Zindeh Pir), he had had one over-whelming mission: to convert Hindustan. Dar-ul-Harb to Dar-ul-Iman: from the land of infidels into the land of faithful. In his eyes, all non-Muslims, whether Hindus, Sikhs, Parsees etc. were all faithless lot and it was his sacred duty ordained by Allāh The Great to bring them all into the fold of Islam the one and only real faith. For this, he set a policy in motion of temptation, coercion and sword. Those with weak heart and mind succumbed to emperor's foxy tactics, But those with resolute mind were put to death summarily. Mercy, compassion, tenderness, generosity, art, aesthetics etc. were merces words. in Emperor's view, for the pastime of the fools and incompetents. He himself showed no mercy at all even to his aged father- Shah Jahan, brothers- Dara Shikoh, Murad, Shia and several kinsmen. Shah Jahan was put behind the bars while others brutally done to death. Aurangzeb's zeal for Islam soon made Hindustan tremble from one corner to other. It was Kashmir wherein the wrath of Emperor's proselytizing fell in full force. Aurangzeb in a way, was antithesis of Akbar, his great grandfather.

↑↑↑↑↑

Chapter 3

Anand Pur- the City of Bliss

This is Anand Pur the city of bliss. About 300 miles northwest away from Delhi, situated in the evergreen Shivalik foot-hills of Himalayas. It is right on the fringe of Punjab plains where from mountainous range of Shiva's abode begins gradually gaining in height range after range. There used to be a village Makhowal in hilly principality of Kehlur. A few miles down south there is Kirat Pur Sahib, a small township inhabited by sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind Ji. Beginning of 16th century in history of India is a very important turning point and a historic landmark. Very important events yielding epoch making consequences took place almost simultaneously. In religious realm, Guru Nanak's House began its historic course in the form of Sikh faith. In political domain, on the other hand, Zaheer-ud-Din Babur, after defeating Ibrahim Lodhi in the battle of Panipat founded Mughal Empire. Babur conquered Delhi in precisely 1526 A.D. By this time, Guru Nanak (1469 - 1539 A.D.) born in Rai Bhoi Di Talwandi (Now famous as Nanakana Sahib in Pakistan) after having conquered the realm of religion had settled in Kartar Pur, the first Sikh shrine by the banks of Ravi river. Guru Nanak had won acclaim from the peoples of the world, especially Hindus and Muslims both mutually hostile communities. The True Guru-the Enlightener-Prophet- who had appeared in the realm of mortals to guide the humanity groping in dark to light. Guru Nanak, accompanied by Bala & Mardana, the Rabaab (Rebec) player, a Hindu and a Muslim respectively had travelled the whole world in all the four corners to spread His Gospel of "Naam" (loving remembrance of God) and service of His creation without discrimination. Babur's dynasty settled in Delhi, Agra and Lahore extended its sway on Hindustan. Meanwhile Guru's House had made inroads into peoples' hearts all across the land, even beyond its frontiers.

Guru Nanak's message, primarily divine though, was

equally emphatic about social liberalization. Freedom, both individual as well as national was another dimension that marked Sikhism distinct from other religious movements.

"Je Jevai Pat Lathi Jaaye II

Sab Haraam Jeta Kichh Khaaye II"

"what good is life of luxuries if one suffers disgrace and dishonour II"

This was directed at India's plight; social, cultural and political. Esteem in human existence and pride in one's land of birth (motherland) added impetus to Guru's philosophy of worthy and successful life. The founder of the Sikh faith made hypocrisy and hollowness in religious practises as well as tyranny and injustice in political sphere his special targets. All other descendants of Guru's Holy Throne stood fast to these doctrines. Fifth Guru Arjun, the builder of Golden Temple, Amritsar & the compiler of Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture, met horrible death (1606 A.D.) in Lahore by the orders of Emperor Jahangir. The Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded in Delhi for the noble cause of freedom of religion. His son, Tenth Guru Gobind Singh looking around the sense of despair, despondency and dispiritedness created 'Khalsa', the order of the pure beings, in order to uproot the evil empire of tyranny and injustice. For this, he had to raise sword to uphold righteousness. He fought a series of battles against hill chiefs and mighty Mughal empire in which, of course, he had to sacrifice his four sons, his mother, close relatives and hundreds of dear followers.

Invading armies- imperial and hill chiefs' forces combined made Guru to quit his fort on seemingly holy oaths, that, were not intended to be observed. Tenth Master said good-bye to his dear Anand Pur at mid-night with his family, literary treasure and numerous comrades in arms. At rivulet Sirsa, enemy attacked. In a pitched battle, Guru's house scattered. Two wives accompanied by Bhai Mani Singh (later Head Priest of Golden Temple, Amritsar) left for Delhi. Two younger sons Zorawar Singh & Fateh Singh along

with their grandmother Gujri (Tenth Guru's mother) and Gangu, Guru's Kitchen servant (butler) to his native village Kheri near Sirhind. Guru himself in the company of his two elder sons Ajit Singh (16), Jujhar Singh (14), and about four dozen Khalsa warriors made way to a fortress in Chamkaur Sahib. By now invading armies had swelled to ten lacs (one million) including regional militias.¹ The fortress was surrounded. Here the history of warfare witnessed an incomparable battle. The Guru, a commander par excellence, sent his companions in batches, one after other to fight the enemy hordes. Guru's own sons died heroic death before his own eyes. The creator of the Khalsa had promised years before to make one Khalsa take on legions of enemies² and

"I will make sparrows hunt hawks II"

The poetic expression came into concrete reality on the battlefield of Chamkaur. Nevertheless, encounter was sheer uneven. In frosty night, Guru at the order of his remaining companions left the fortress. The wandering brought him over to the jungle of Machhiwara. Having lost everything and in spite of miserable conditions the Creator of Khalsa could still sing, under the canopy of starry sky;

*"Tell my Beloved, the tale of my bleeding heart-
without Thee, all the luxuries are like fire pit, but
with*

Thee, O, my love! All the cruelties are welcome II"

Bhai Daya Singh, Maan Singh and two Patthans devotees Nabi Khan & Ghani Khan, the horse dealers, came down in searching. The Guru dressed up in blue- the attire of holy men of Uch- near Multan moved deeper into Malwa region. He was stopped at a check point by the searching troops but was let go on the word of Pir Muhammad, Guru's Persian teacher. Passing through Alamgir near Ludhiana and other places Guru halted at Raikot.³ Rai Kalha, the local chief

1 Zafarnameh: Guru's letter of victory to Emperor Aurangzeb,

2 "Swa Lakh Se Ek Laraoon.....II" Panth Parkash-Giani Gian singh as well as popular belief among the Sikhs.

3 Gurdwara Tahliana Sahib stands there in sacred memory.

came to pay his respects. While there, Guru got the news of his sons having been bricked alive and also that of his mother's demise in Sarhind. Guru took the shocking news with divine composure and uttered, "Now the root of Mughal empire gets uprooted." Right away a plant was uprooted. Guru's route took him through Dina Kangar, Kot Kapura etc., finally to Khidranai Di Dhaab: a water-reservoir in the midst of vast desert land with a few green patches, still fewer habitats.

Royal army's Sarhind component was on hot pursuit. There were intermittent lulls but campaign against the Guru was constant without let up. Here too, those forty who had deserted their Master in the midst of the battle of Anand Pur months before, came back with regrets written on the faces. Mother Bhago came to intervene on their behalf. Around water-reservoir, a pitched battle was fought between the Khalsa remnants heavily outnumbered though and the imperial forces ending in Khalsa's victory. Mughal forces retreated with consolation the rebel Guru had finally been pushed into corner. Tenth Master watched the whole scene at a distance from a vantage point. His arrows proved quite deadly for the enemy. After the battle was over, Tenth Master came down and looked at blood dripping faces of deserters. He was moved to the core. At their leader, Mahan Singh's plea, Guru lovingly, with tearful eyes, tore up the disclaimer and blessed them as "The Liberated Ones". Khidranai Di Dhaab, the water-reservoir goes down in history as famous Mukatsar-The Pool of Salvation. This was the last battle of prolonged campaign. Guru proceeded to Talwandi Sabo-Damdama Sahib in southern Punjab.

Meanwhile from Anand Pur to Khidranai Di dhaab, Guru's travel all through was an exhilarating experience. People would come to have his glimpse, listen to his sermon and walk away with new spirit in their bones. His popularity gained in leaps and bounds because of tragedies and miseries he had suffered. Almost every spot along the way got sanctified by the touch of His Feet and many were redeemed.

Behind this public demonstration of affection, people were not yet ready to rise in rebellion in Guru's favour. Some even turned their back to Guru's amusement.

Nevertheless, something serious was also going on behind the scene. Certain number of people, with influence and good intention were active to affect some sort of truce and bring about peace. Nawaab of Malerkotla Sher Muhammad Khan, was one of them. He was maternal uncle of Aurangzeb and one of very few closest to the Emperor. He wrote a letter to the Emperor explaining everything and also advising in the context of Holy Quran's reference as to the right course to be taken. Emperor himself was miles away in Deccan (South), Ahmed Nagar bogged down in protracted hostilities against Shiva Ji Marahattha. Nawaab's letter kind of pricked Emperor's conscious. He issued orders to his officials, especially the Nawaab of Sarhind to stop military action and leave Guru alone as also a letter to the Tenth Master expressing his regrets as to what had occurred in the past and invited him to Deccan for personal interview. Guru sent his answer. Emperor responded by sending another invitation. Guru wrote, while staying at Dina Kangarr, his famous 'Zafarnameh'-The Epistle of Victory⁴. Bhai Daya Singh was deputed to deliver it in person to the Emperor in Deccan.



4 Zafarnamah is a document of immense historic importance. It shows vividly, not only sword, Guru's pen was equally effective also.



GURU GOBIND SINGH Ji's YOUNGER SONS ZORAWAR SINGH & FATEH SINGH BEING BRICKED ALIVE IN SARHIND



GURDWARA FATEHGARH SAHIB

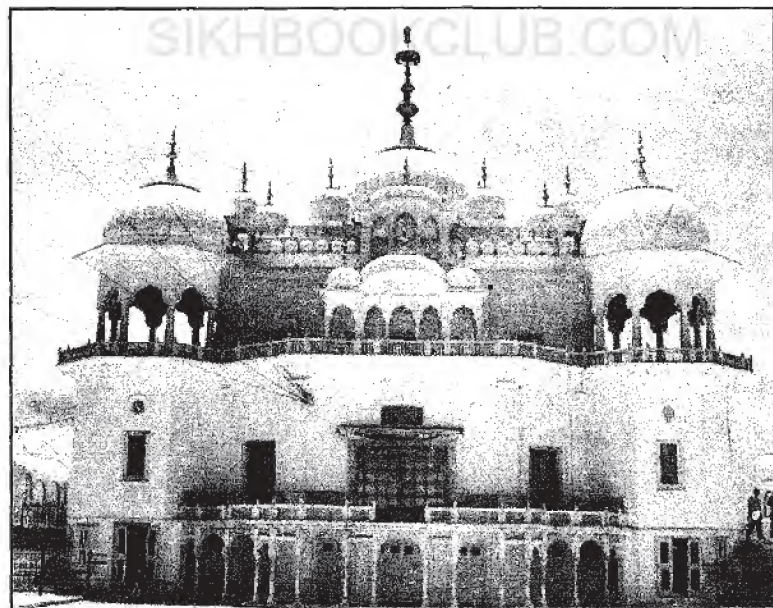
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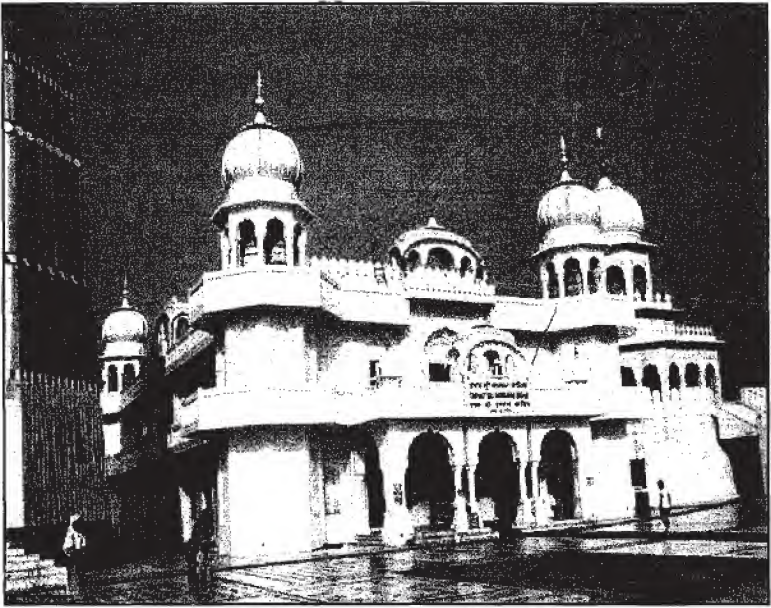
RAUZA-I-SHARIF, SARHIND



GURU GOBIND SINGH JI GRANTING **FIVE** ARROWS,
SAFFRON FLAG AND DRUM (NAGARA)



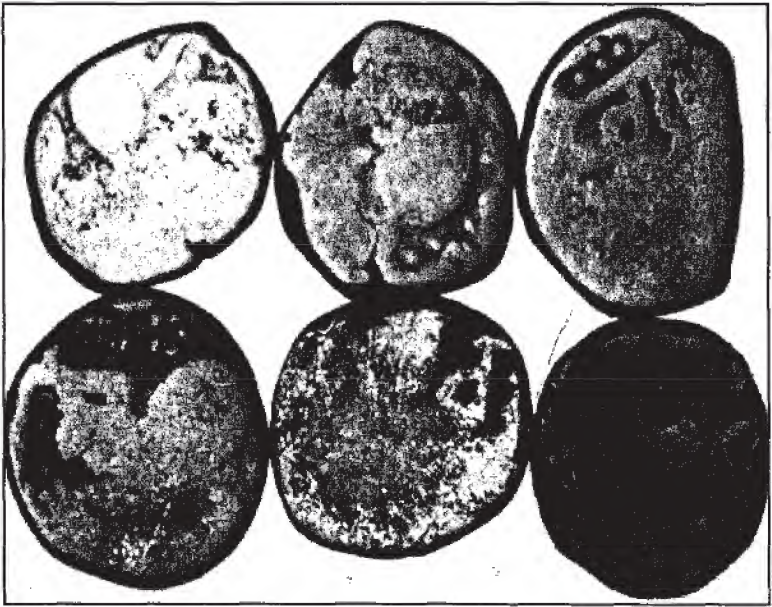
TAKHAT (THRONE) SRI ABCHAL NAGAR, HAZUR SAHIB,
NANDERH (MAHARASHTRA)



TAKHAT SRI DAMDAMA SAHIB



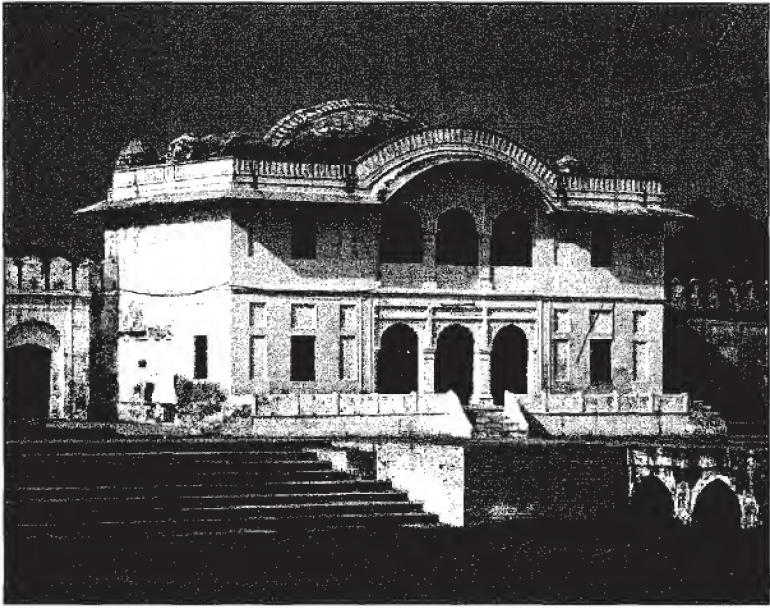
GURDWARA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR (BANDA GHAAT, GODAWARI)



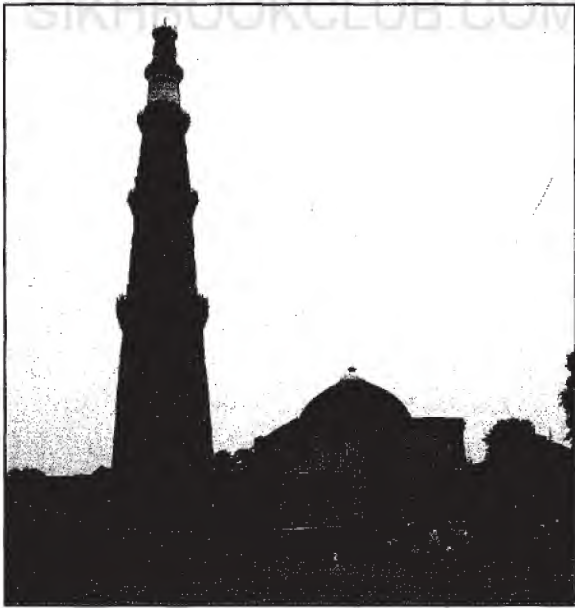
BANDA BAHADUR'S COINS OF THE SIKH STATE



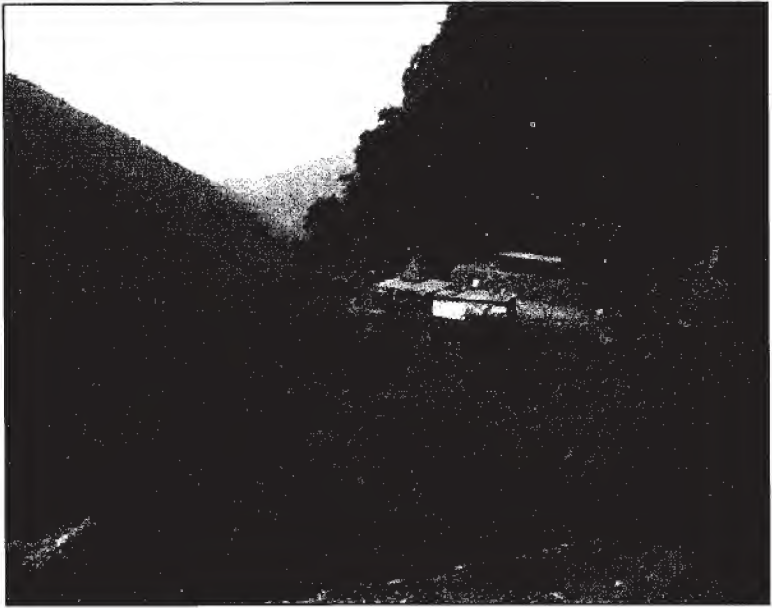
THE LAST GREAT MUGHAL EMPEROR AURANGZEB
ALAMGIR - ZINDEH PIR



AAM KHAS BAGH, SARHIND



QUTUB MINAR, DELHI



DERA BABA BANDA SINGH, RIASI, JAMMU

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QUILAH (CASTLE) BANDA SINGH BAHADUR



BANDA BAHADUR ON MARCH

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BATTLE OF SARHIND - CHHAPARH JHIRRHI

Chapter 4

In the sands of Talwandi Sabo

This is Talwandi Sabo (ki), a small village in the sandy stretches of southern Punjab. Further on, the land turns to a long and broad desert engulfing Rajasthan, Sindh and parts of Gujrat.

Kind of semi-autonomous landlords, jagirdaars and petty chieftains mainly governed this area. Since it was not much fertile region, central authorities of Lahore and Delhi would seldom interfere with local administration. Nevertheless, Talwandi Sabo was located in the sector through which ancient highway from Iran, Afghanistan passed via Bolan Pass, Multan, Bathinda, Hissar to Delhi. Talwandi Sabo and the surrounding area was in the possession of Dalla, a local chieftain. He, like many others, was a devotee of the Guru's House. Guru Nanak had travelled through these regions followed by Sixth, Seventh & Ninth Gurus. A sizable number of people had embraced Sikhism. Being quite far away from the central theater of hostilities between the Guru and the Mughal forces, they were safe and led a peaceful life. Guru was greeted with open arms and warm hearts. From Anand Pur Sahib to Khidranai Di Dhaab, hundreds of miles long path way had witnessed bloody skirmishes. Khidrana was the last front. Now in Talwandi, Guru, had in fact, had an opportunity to rest, free from the din of battle. Worldly engagements and affairs of the mundane were almost over. It was time to turn to spiritual and literary endeavours. It was here that he set himself to the sacred task of compiling new version of the Scripture, Adi Granth, then in possession of Dhirmal's family, had refused to give it at Guru's request. Bhai Mani Singh served as the scribe. Ninth Guru's verses were inserted at proper places, into the Scripture & it got finally completed. Guru took to other literary works also. Here, Guru issued an edict, "From now on, this place will be called 'Guru Ki Kanshi' (The

University of Sikh Studies)- equivalent to renowned Kanshi of the Hindu Scholars. The Guru cutting reed pens blessed the place that this will be the monastery-cum-university of the Sikhs for future."

People began to throng to Talwandi Sabo, which began to thrive with great hustle and bustle. It was like Anand Pur, once again. Mothers Sundri, Sahib Devan and Bhai Mani Singh came with Delhi congregation. It was very touching reunion. Mothers looked around and asked, "Where are our sons? We don't see their moon-faces."

"They have been sacrificed to the cause of righteousness by Immortal Being's Will."

Mothers and congregation began to weep.

"Weep not, my beloved congregation," Tenth Master lovingly consoled them, "They are immortals and are shining stars, for they have died for noble-cause."

Pointing to the congregation, he uttered, "We have sacrificed all four sons over these, My Khalsa-congregation. Why to mourn for them, when my sons and daughters live in thousands. Great are Thou, O Master."

All present echoed and wiped their tears off.

Talwandi witnessed many a wonderful act. One day, in congregation, Bhai Dalla said, "Master! If you had sent for me in your days of trouble, we would have come to your rescue."

Guru listened in good humour. Right then, incidentally, a devotee came over and presented a gun as offering. The Master picked it up for checking.

"My Dear Dallah Let us try its firepower. Would you place a man of yours for target in front."

Dalla called upon, his people including his own sons. No one came forward. Dalla felt ashamed. Looking other way, Guru said to an attendant, "Alright! You see those two Sikhs tying up turbans. Go & tell them that Guru wants to check gun's firepower. He needs one of you for target."

They both rushed to the place and began vying with one another for front position. Guru fired the gun, sending

bullet over their heads. They came, bowed and were blessed by the Guru.

“You see, brother Dalla! They are my Khalsa. They were with us all along.”

Dalla fell at Master's feet and got himself baptised. Here, once again, like Anand Pur, baptising ceremony was arranged in which thousands, new Sikhs became Khalsas. Days were ticking by when, one day, royal emissaries appeared with invitation to meet with the Emperor in Deccan at the time. Guru said good-bye to Talwandi and left for Ahmad Nagar via Rajasthan.



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Chapter 5

Imperial Camp in Deccan

This is Ahmad Nagar- Oct, 1707 AD, Mughal Emperor's camp. For last several years, Emperor has been staying here to launch and supervise Deccan campaigns in which he annexed almost all deccan states. The city is situated on the border line of the north & south of India in foothills of Vindhayachal Mountain, which both geographically as well as culturally separates south from the north. From Vindhayachal begins the southern plateau popularly known as Deccan. Emperor, in his wishful zeal to bring whole subcontinent under Mughal control has encamped in Ahmad Nagar for almost 25 last years of his life. Once out of Delhi, Aurangzeb had had no opportunity to go back.

Undoubtedly Aurangzeb had justified his title 'Aalamgir'- capturer of the world- in terms of India subcontinent. His was one of the mightiest empires of the world at that time. European powers, especially Portuguese & English, had also begun their trade by then. A few Europeans, particularly, the medical professionals had also joined Mughal service. One, Manucchi, an Italian traveler & historian even managed to get closer to the emperor's inner circles. His commentaries about Mughal affairs are quite interesting. But Deccan venture had proved highly costly and embarrassing to some extent. Emperor could not crush Marahatta disturbance completely. Shiva Ji remained active in cat and mouse game with the imperial forces. Rajasthan was also feeling uneasy and discontent among the Rajput princes was intensifying. But most of all what affected the future of the grand Mughal Empire was what had happened in the north in Punjab. Guru Nanak's Sikhs, now turned Khalsa by Tenth Guru Gobind Singh, had begun to shake up the edifice of the mighty Mughals' at its very roots. This was precisely what was causing the Aalamgir lose his peaceful sleep of

nights.

Aurangzeb was, in a way, antithesis to his celebrated great grand-father-Akbar the Great. Although founded by Zeheer-ud-Din Babur, the Empire of the Mughals, in real terms was put on stable foundation by him. Akbar was Babur's grandson. Humayun, Babur's son had lost his shaky Hindustan to Sher Shah Suri, an Afghan only to reclaim it after a lapse of almost 15 years. Akbar, through his policies of religious tolerance, fairness and real politic had endeared himself to the people of Hindustan, both Hindus & non-Hindus. The people of the sword, the Rajputs, he had won over to his stirrups with loving treatment, subtle diplomacy of force and matrimonial alliances. He even tried to put into effect his own trend of religious dispensation- Din-I-Allahi-the faith of Allah, which, however, wouldn't appeal to people at large. Akbar promoted sort of cultural infusion between Hindus and the Muslims to mould them into one Hindustani nation. He visited Goindwal to pay respects to third Guru Amar Das & got himself blessed with Guru's Grace. Since Lahore served as the working capital of Hindustan,, from time to time, Akbar, whenever in Punjab, took due notice of Guru's House & appreciated its efforts at creating harmony, peace and high moral conduct among followers. When Punjab, especially the central tract was severely effected by famine, Fifth Guru Arjun approached the Emperor, then in Lahore to exempt the farmers from official land revenue and help the people in distress. Akbar readily accepted Guru's plea and was highly pleased with Guru's concern for humanity irrespective of cast & creed. But Akbar's great grandson Aurangzeb was a man of altogether different mould.

He was a fanatic Muslim whose mission, it was to transform Dar-ul-hurb, Hindustan into Dar-ul-Iman: from the land of infidels to the land of the faithful. He looked upon Hindus and all other non-Muslim communities as infidels, the faithless and the Muslims alone, the faithful. For this, he set into motion the policy of religious bigotry and

persecution.

Soon after accession to the Mughal throne he acted as a stone hearted man, a strong ruler and a capable army commander. Cunning in the guise of faith, politeness, religiosity and diplomacy, the most effective weapon in his armour. *Loath* to arts and aesthetic expression he abhorred poetry, dance and music. Pious to the core in his own fantasy, he would write copies of Holy Quran with his own hands and sell them to the deserving in order to make money for his very personal expenses. He is said to have told his beloved Begum (Queen) at her request to employ a few servants in her household chores, he was an ordinary person and could not afford that luxury with meagre income. When reminded of his being emperor in possession of immeasurable treasures, his answer was that that was the trust of the Empire meant to be spent for governing functioning. He was a great *calligrapher* as well as a *skilled, proficient* letter writer. His letters written in charming but diplomatic style would as often as not would baffle his enemies with regard to their course of action. Above all, he was a highly learned man well conversant with the dogmas, creeds and verses of various faiths especially those prevalent in his empire. But all this was marred by one, single most insurmountable flaw. He was extremely suspicion of nature to the point of paranoid.

Aurangzeb was strict believer of 'kingship knows no kinship'. Nobody was good or noble enough to pierce the veil of doubt in emperor's nature. So much so, his own sons were not beyond the orbit of suspicion. To some extent, the emperor was close to his daughter Zeb-ul-Nisa, pride of his life but Zeb's too much inclination toward poetry and fine arts drove the wedge between father & daughter. All these merits and demerits combined with old age would suffice to render the almighty Aurangzeb to be a pathetic figure. Sucked in his own cocoon of loneliness, the evening of the strongest of the Mughal emperors loomed in despair, failure and gloom. The disturbances in his great empire had shattered emperor's peace of mind completely. He felt his grip on the

empire as well as on his own mind and body had begun to slacken. It was, indeed, one of such black days when Bhai Daya Singh & his companions appeared at the doors of the royal encampment to present "Zafarnameh"- the letter of Tenth Master.

Absorbed in thoughts, Emperor murmured--- "After me-the deluge.."

"Your Majesty!" attendant startled him "There are messengers from Punjab."

"Who are they?"

"They are Sikhs and have a letter for Your Majesty."

"Oh," Emperor cooed, "Show them in."

Bhai Daya Singh & his companions entered with loud

'Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa II

Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh II'

Aurangzeb looked at them and was impressed with their saint-soldier like appearance.

"Your Majesty! here we are to have the honour of presenting this special epistle from our Holy Majesty to your Imperial Majesty in person"

Emperor enquired, "And who might that be- Your Holy Majesty?"

"Our Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Ninth occupant of Guru Nanak's holy Throne." Bhai Daya Singh replied and handed the letter to the attendant.

"We see! "Contrary to his nature the Emperor was a bit amused. He took the letter from his attendant and dismissed his audience with command, "Well, gentlemen, wait for our answer and stay, meantime, as royal guests till further orders next meeting. Shab-ba-Khair (Good-Night !)"



Chapter 6

Zafar Nameh-----the Epistle of Victory

It was a stormy night, cold and windy. Sky was blackened with dense roaming clouds. Lightening flashed around the horizon almost constantly. Imperial camp was forced to confine itself within the parameter, so were its personnel. Everything seemed to have been quietened other than the mother nature. But not so with the imperial residence. Aurangzeb Aalamgir, the Emperor was upon his heels pacing in rounds and rounds. Luxurious four walls and fabulous Persian rug under his feet afforded no comfort. He looked out the silken drapes. The storm outside was nowhere near the one within. His soul had been pierced with countless arrows. His heart hardened by the upheavals of political world and his mind seasoned by the vicissitudes of life, now, in turmoil, were yearning for a sliver of peace and of course, comfort of sleep. It seemed his soul, heart and mind like his feeble, aged body had stopped to listen to his command. The Emperor was alone by himself yet distant and beside his true self. Punjab emissaries' letter had turned his imperial world up and down. It was part of his official routine to listen to letters, circulars, petitions, applications, memorandums and so forth and to respond accordingly. He himself was a master calligraphist. But what was this? A mere letter that too, from a seemingly vanquished rebel, particularly its title "Zafarnameh' & its contents". But verily it was the title Zafarnameh that had gone right through Emperor Aalamgir's heart, mind & soul. Aalamgir found his world lying in pieces all around him. Lightening struck once again. Emperor slowly walked up to the table and once again picked up Zafarnameh. He fixed his gaze on the opening lines.

"In the name of Almighty God, lasting from eternity to eternity-Graceful, Provider of livelihood to one and all, the Emancipator, Master of all arts, excellence and miracles Lord of His Own Will & Merciful....."

Emperor uttered, 'Bismilla-i-Rahim!' and touched the letter with his forehead.

**"Na Saaz-o- Na Baaz-o- Na Fauj-o- Na Farash II
Khudawanda Bakhshinda -i-Aish-o-Arash II"**

"Some one having no worldly possessions, much less royal trappings of hawk, army, luxurious palaces, but if he is favoured by God, he would become Master of worldly luxuries."

Every word of the letter was hitting the innermost core of the Emperor. Zeb-ul-Nisa, his daughter was in attendance as usual. She was watching his father's face but dared not to intrude.

**"Shahanshah Aurangzeb Almeen
Dara-i-Daur- Ast Doorast -Deen!"**

"O Emperor!" Zafarnameh continued, "you are a great king, adoration of the throne-you are all conquering, king of the kings like Dara i.e. Darius, the Persian Emperor of ancient times but sadly you are far far away from the real faith of the Prophet Muhammad."

Zafarnameh portrayed Aurangzeb in a fascinating but more real than reality brush. Tenth Master had extolled Emperor's merits and talents: as a person, army general as well as administrator, ruler but touching upon his true nature of fox-like cunning and mercilessness, Guru's pen performed like that of a surgeon. It didn't desist from drawing him as cruel, heartless and fraudulent man who would stop at no crime however heinous, even using Holy Quran for his selfish, baser and political purpose. Emperor overwhelmed with emotions and remorse sat in chair, began heaving rapidly. There began a picture to emerge before his aged eyes.

He was a child with three brothers and two sisters (they were fourteen in all but all others died). His father and mother doted on them all. It was a royal household. Servants males and females were always at their disposal. It was a paradise of innocence and fantasy. They all slowly grew up in the warmth of their father Emperor Shah Jahan and mother Queen Mumtaz Mahel's love and fondness. Youth came over and they all began to drift away on their respective paths. When he began started to feel a little hostility to his elder brother Dara Shikoh, he did not

know- perhaps it was Dara's liberal views than those of his own or his parents' excessive, rather partisan affection for Dara. More Dara became apple of his parents' eyes, more Aurangzeb felt animosity toward his brother. Emperor Shah Jahan, in order to have them trained in the craft of governance and rulership, appointed all other three princes governors of distant provinces, but he kept Dara closer to him as governor of Punjab. Aurangzeb, in order to curb his feelings tilted toward religious practices of reading Quran, rotating of rosary, prayers and fasts. Along with rigorous religious observances, his mind grew more receptive to political machination, battle tactics and the business of government. Soon he came to develop a doctrine of his own- subtle combination of religious piety, political cunning and apparent disinclination for imperial power- all veiled in an aura of obedient & successful prince, governor and commander. Rumours began to pour in. He heard, Emperor Shah Jahan, his father had fallen sick and he had delegated his imperial authority to Dara Shikoh for day to day business of the empire. Lightning struck once again outside. Aurangzeb jolted up. Zeb-ul-Nisa looked in but Emperor waved her to stay off. His hand slipped toward Zafarnameh.

"Humoon Mard Bayad Shawad Sukhawwar-II"

Na Shikme, Digar Dar Dahane Digar.....II"

"The measure of a real man is this, he keeps his word and not that he has something else in his stomach from what he says from his mouth II"

Aurangzeb felt pangs of shame for how he had dealt with his brothers Murad and Shujah with assurances he simply wanted to save Mughal Empire from Dara's heretic tendencies and would make either of them the next emperor of Hindustan. At Samugarh, he out-smarted Dara & won the battlefield. Dara fled for his life. Aurangzeb wasting no time advanced to Agra and put his sick father Shah Jahan under house arrest, where he died after years of captivity, broken hearted and weeping in memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal. Dara was captured & beheaded. He sent his brother's severed head as a tribute to his prisoner father.



Chapter 7

Stormy Night

Strong wind blasted against the tent walls that sent a shiver down Alamgir's spine. Declaring himself as the Emperor of Hindustan, he invited Murad to a banquet and after plying him with strong liquor imprisoned him. He died in prison. Shujah saved his skin by fleeing into the eastern jungles and was never heard of. Pacing back and forth, Aurangzeb went through every couplet of Zafarnameh. He had had Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur beheaded in Delhi for Guru's steadfastness for the noble cause of freedom of faith. He ordered Sarmad, a Sufi Faqir, to be killed. Tenth Guru's call for righteousness was interpreted by him a rebellion. So the army raid on Anand Pur. His commanders had promised in his name on Holy Quran to give Guru's family a safe corridor but no one bothered to keep sanctity of the sacred oaths. Guru was pursued all through. His younger sons were bricked alive in Sarhind by the orders of Mughal Governor Wazir Khan. Guru's mother died of shock. At Chamkaur, the Guru along with his two elder sons and a handful companions was attacked by almost one million raiders. How could they fight for long? Zafarnameh continued, "Like Emperor, I am also a firm believer of one, Almighty- Merciful God-the creator, sustainer, destroyer, the common father of all creation, His creatures, the human race. So, there was no conflict in creed, hence no point in waging war against Guru's House. What good it was to put out a few sparks when the great fire still blazing on. If Emperor's armies & officials succeeded in killing Guru's four sons but what about the Khalsa- Guru's spiritual son that is still alive. If Emperor wished reconciliation, he was welcome to southern Punjab, the land of proud "Brars" who are my faithful warriors."⁵

5. Firdowsi's Shah Nameh* is a famous book in Persian on great kings, their kingdoms and their rise and fall.

"See", O Emperor! Cheh Khush Gufat- how beautiful," Firdowsi, the sweet talker says, "When all the peaceful means to arrive at a just settlement have failed, it is an act of righteousness to get hold of the sword."

*"Chunkar-i- Az Hamah Heelte-DarguzastII
Halal Ast Burdan Ba Shamshir-i-Dast II"*

Once again there was a roar of clouds and thunderbolt. Zafarnameh came to conclusion:-

"Babeen Ghardash-i Bewafa-i- Zaman....II"

"Look carefully O Emperor! The treacherous onging movement of time. It never stops for long at one place. The sword of time is always in motion. It is about to strike at you, very soon." Aurangzeb felt a powerful shudder run through his shaky body.

"Khudawand-i-Kareem" he uttered.

It was a strange feeling of mixture of repentance and relief. Right away, he gave instructions for Daya Singh and issued orders to stop action against Tenth Guru and sent his emissaries to invite him for personal meeting in Deccan at Ahmad Nagar.

After reading Zafarnameh, Aurangzeb was not in his self. He come face to face with his true self. Every couplet was as powerful as Holy Quran's verses, as soothing as Prophet of Arabia's words. It was a mirror that reflected Emperor's whole being both exterior and interior to the fullest. Zafarnameh's portrayal of Aurangzeb Aalamgir was the truest and the honest one. Emperor's soul knew perfectly well not an iota was away from reality. Aurangzeb's personality, his deeds fully captured in brief but soul stirring manner.

"Babeen Ghardash-i-Be-Wafa-i-Zaman." was like a spear tore through Emperor's body, heart, mind and soul. Tracherous memories rushed back to him; how he had treated his father and brothers. In fact, Mughal Dynasty had had a sort of curse upon it. Every succession was bloody and through massacre of one's own blood and flesh. Saleem alias Jahangir revolted against Akbar. Shah Jahan became rebel against Jahangir. In turn Shah Jahan suffered miserably at the

hands of his own son, Aurangzeb. Each new occupant of Mughal throne's first order of business would be to kill other real and imaginary rivals, usually brothers and nephews. Now it was the turn of Aurangzeb Alamgir's himself. Of late, he had been hearing bad news about his sons. Akbar was conspiring with Rajputs against his own father, the emperor. Other sons Muazzam, Tara Azam, Kam Bakhsh were engaged in cut throat game against each other and their father too. Guilt, sense of failure, remorse, old/age and weakened physique; Emperor had to escape from circumstances that seemed to conspire against him. Only solace he could find was in Allah The Great and His Prophet Muhammad's Name. "La-Allah" Aurangzeb murmured. Storm struck again. He felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off his chest.

He sat in chair and began writing letter, "My beloved Son!..." Pricked by the pangs of conscience, he took last breath. Abul Muzaffar Aurangzeb, Aalamgir, Ghazi, the Emperor of Hindustan died. Zafarnameh was lying open on the table.

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Chapter 8

Fragrance in Desert

Tenth Master was staying at Baghaur in Rajasthan when he heard the news. Prior to it, Bhai Daya Singh on his return from Ahmad Nagar, Deccan had reported to the Master how he was received by the Emperor. "His demeanour", told Daya Singh, "was respectful and sounded reconciliatory."

This is *Baghaur* - Rajasthan. Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh is staying here on his way to Deccan. It is an expansive sandy tract, but studded with majestic mansions and magnificent temples, home of brave, proud Rajputs, a race born of fire so the legend goes. Rajasthan has played very important role in the history of India. In fact, before Muslim subjugation, India saw the glorious reign of various Rajput dynasties, all across from north to south and from east to west. Several names such as Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Rana Sanga, Maharana Partap and others shine like stars in Rajasthan's history. But as proud as they were, this splendid race suffered from a genetic draw back. Too sensitive to honour both individually as well as racially and very quick to pledge themselves for something and very mindful of keeping the given word, they would succumb to the pulls of disunity very easily. Muslim invaders from north-west exploited this bane of disunity and fratricidal tendencies among Rajputs to the fullest.

Guru Nanak's visits through the deserts of Rajasthan brought many a Rajput king in contact with Guru's House as faithful devotees. Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied by Ram Singh, a Rajput Chief and a Commander of Mughal army on way to Assam in the east helped in bringing about a peaceful settlement. Tenth Guru marched in slow paces through the land of Rajputs halting at places, addressing the congregations that were also attended by several Rajput Chiefs. It was at *Baghaur* that Guru received the news of Aurangzeb's death. Everything changed dramatically. Following up the custom, Emperor's sons

scrambled to occupy the throne. War of succession among brothers began to rage in full swing.

One day, Bhai Nand Lal came to pay respects. Guru Gobind Singh was very pleased to see his learned devotee. Nand Lal was a gem both at Guru's Divine Court as well as Mughal Court. Especially, Prince Muazzam was very fond of him. His book of poetry, a collection of Persian Ghazals was favourite with the courtiers including Aurangzeb himself as also men of letters. His impressions about Guru's glimpse when he saw his radiant face rippled on people's lips.

"Din-o-Duniyan Darkamand-i-an Pari Rukhsha-i-Maa.

Har Do Aalam keemat-i-Yak Taar-i-Moo-i-Yaar-i-Maa.."

'Both worlds of the faith and worldly glamour, are captives of the fairy like face of My Beloved.....

And both the worlds - this as well as the one hereafter are worth one single hair of the tresses of my lover....."

Guru greeted Nand Lal⁶ his dear devotee, warmly. Nand Lal was on a very sensitive mission. Offering presents on his Master, Prince Muazzam's behest, Nand Lal beseeched Guru's blessings as well as military support for the prince who was embattled in the war of succession. Tenth Master pondered over briefly the pros and cons and the established convention in such matters and agreed to send a batch of Khalsa warriors under the command of Himmat Singh, one of the five beloved ones. Muazzam won the day in the ensuing battle in which his rival brother Tara Azam is said to have died with arrow of Himmat Singh. Muazzam, now Bahadur Shah as the new Emperor of Hindustan invited Guru to Agra, to express his gratitude. Tenth Master, accompanied by his followers Khalsa warriors, proceeded to Agra accordingly.



6 Nand Lal coming first time presented his book *Bandagi Nameh*, a collection of Persian ghazals. Tenth Master was so much delighted as to rename it as *Zindagi Nameh* : The book of eternal life. Nand Lal was Muazzam's principal secretary.

Chapter 9

Miracle in Agra

This is Agra. Situated by the banks of Jamuna, Agra is famous for its Taj Mahal, a wonder in architecture that has gone down in history as well as peoples' memory as the 'pearl of immortal love'. Along with Delhi and Lahore, the city served as the capital of Muslim Empire of Hindustan from time to time. Patthan Sultans, especially Lodhis used to keep their treasure of gems and diamonds in Agra. It was here that Prince Humayun found world famous Koh-i-Noor after defeating the Afghan garrison which he presented to Zaheer-ud-Din Babur, his father the conqueror of Panipat., for that matter, Hindustan. In Agra & its surroundings, Mughal Emperors found their aesthetic hunger and appreciation for art satisfied.

Akbar, the great Mughal, had another attraction to be in Agra. His devotion to Sufi Faqir Saleem Chishti of Ajmer would suffice to keep the Emperor in close vicinity. Shah Jahan & Queen Mumtaz Maha' were extremely fond of Agra. Ironically, it was here that the builder of Taj Mahal had to spend his last painful years in captivity in Royal Fort. Aurangzeb proclaimed himself as the emperor of Hindustan in Agra. Political expediency kept him away from Agra & Delhi for almost 25 years of his reign in Deccan where he breathed his last longing to have a glimpse of Agra, and see Delhi and Lahore, of-course.

Nowadays, Agra is, once again, basking in majestic splendour. Bahadur Shah has succeeded to the throne of his forefathers after having done away with all his rivals. Tenth Guru arrived in the capital city. Agra felt a fresh breeze of spring blowing through all across. Emperor greeted him in full regalia with warm welcome and humbleness due to Guru's spiritual status.

Occasionally, Mughal court would look often like an auditorium. The Guru, placed on high pedestal and accompanied by Bhai Nand Lal, who would serve as Guru's

secretary as well as spokesman at the moment, was often found engaged in dialogue with religious heads i.e. Qazis, Maulanaas etc and nobility. Subject matter ranged from subtle, sublime, spiritual to utterly mundane, all others in between. New Emperor and royal ladies behind veils were amazed at lively discussions and Guru's wonderful conduct throughout on strictly fundamental issues relating to Islamic theology as regards God- Allah, Prophet Muhammad, Nimaz, salvation, heaven, hell, man's destiny etc. Tenth Master's pronouncements were very enlightening, illuminating and more convincing than those of the traditional scholars and exponents. Devotees as well as commoners would flock to have vision of Guru's face and listen to his soothing words.

In between, Emperor and the Tenth Master would go for game into the forest. Everybody including Bahadur Shah himself & his seasoned generals were surprised to see Guru's astounding proficiency in martial skills, especially the art of archery and swordmanship. To everyone, Guru was the combination of "True King & Saint-Prophet" indeed. But behind this friendly façade, both Guru & Emperor were also engaged in very serious, intimate and sensitive parleys as to the future relationship between the Empire and Guru's House.

Guru's stay in Agra revealed astonishing aspects of his personality and a blend of divinity and humanity. One day, the phenomenon of miracles and charisma came under discussion. Of course, the Master happened to be the most charismatic figure, among the prophets. Religious heads as well as grandees insisted upon Guru's showing a miracle, as the followers at large looked upon him as a prophet. The Guru perfectly saw through their intentions. In a light but serious sounding vein, he dwelt upon the concept in brief that human beings ought to have unshakable faith in Almighty God, the Master of miracles and chrismas and confidence in one's skills. But his audience would not rest the matter there. In response to their insistence, Guru said, "Well, miracle does exist right before their eyes. Emperor's command is a miracle. It can take from or give life to

someone. No one could disobey." The courtiers wanted something more. "Second miracle is the attraction of wealth. Money is the mover and shaker." The amused audience still unconvinced. Then Guru in a flash, took his sword out of sheath and uttered, "This is the greatest miracle on earth-power & its magic. Everything, beauty, art, wealth etc., flock to power like moths to a flame."

There was pin-drop silence all around. Then Guru flashed a honeyed smile to the stunned court, "So, let us all sing praises to the Merciful Lord- All powerful and Glorious Father of us all." This was a superb lesson in pragmatism and realities on the ground. Flash came back.-

* * * * *

"I am thy slave!"

Madho Das had said in perfect sincerity. For him these were not mere words. He had surrendered his total existence to the Master. It was surrender in totality. His days and nights, from now on, would be spent in the solacious company of his new mentor, apart from his personal routine of Yoga, meditation and a few other things. Tenth Master, in the congregation of his Khalsa companions while strolling around salubrious Godawari, narrated to Madho Das the history of his dispensation beginning with Guru Nanak. How the Gurus preached their gospel and in order to upkeep the integrity and sanctity of their principles how they suffered peacefully but when rulers, showing no regard to basic human niceties, tortured them to death, how His Grandfather the Sixth Guru "Har Gobind" and he, in person now had to raise sword for the noble cause of righteousness. When tale reached the point of Tenth Master's own sufferings, further down to how his father Ninth Guru was beheaded for the freedom of faith; how after creating Khalsa, the order of pure beings, his own four sons, old mother and hundreds of dedicated followers heroically died. Madho Das turned Banda's blood would begin boiling Sojourn at Godawari

ended up in Banda's getting baptised and subsequently appointed leader of the Sikhs in temporal affairs. The Guru gave him saffron flag, five arrows with command, "Go forth, put an end to tyranny and set up the kingdom of peace and justice." Banda bowed his head and accompanied by five councillors and several comrades in arms set out on a long and torturous journey to Punjab.



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Chapter 10

Through Panipat, Samana, Kapuri, Sadhaura to Lahore

Banda showed his first hand right under the very nose of Delhi, the capital of Mughal India. Panipat, the famous spot that goes down in history as the battlefield deciding India's political fate became his first target. In a lightening raid, he smashed the rulers and dealt a severe blow to Mughal authority. Along the way, at times, he would loot royal caravans carrying treasures to meet his requirements in terms of money, weapons, ammunition and taking care of his men. Soon he became a whirl-wind sweeping through all the land stretched to the borders of Punjab. Every where his militia-cum-army crushed the resistance whatsoever. All the big cities in northern India along the royal highway from Delhi to Lahore began to tremble in anticipation of Banda's advance especially those places that were, somehow associated with Mughal rulers' atrocities on the Sikhs and innocent masses. Samana, a rich and prosperous town in southern Punjab in particular, bore the brunt of Banda's fury for it was this town the two persecutors of Guru's younger sons belonged to. Furthermore, Samana's wealth provided a great temptation to the newly converts, zealots as well as mercenaries who joined Banda's hordes more for loot and hoot. Samana was known for 22 Nawaab families, who were highly placed officials in the Mughal Empire with rich coffers. Banda fell upon Samana and mowed it into rubbles.

Next town that tasted the edge of Banda's sword was Sadhaura, in Shivalik ranges. Pir Budhu Shah, a revered Sufi Saint was a devoted admirer of Guru Gobind Singh. On his recommendation, the Creator of Khalsa had recruited about five hundred Pathans in his new budding army. But to Pir's dismay, almost all those swords-men deserted the Tenth Master in the battle of Bhangani which, nevertheless, resulted in Guru's victory. Adding further to the grief, Budhu Shah's

own four sons, on the contrary, had fallen on the battlefield blazing thus the trail of loyalty that is a proverbial hall mark of Patthan character and of a true Muslim for that matter.

Budhu Shah (Badr-ud-Din) was a true Sufi Saint indeed. He had had close proximity with the Mughal Court in Delhi because of his wife's brother Said Khan. Said Khan was one of high ranking commanders in Imperial Army. He was sent to curb Guru's activities and bring him to the court. On way to Anand Pur Sahib, Said Khan stopped by his sister's place. The couple, both Budhu Shah and his wife Naseeran Begum tried to persuade the general not to raid Anand Pur but to no avail. Anyhow, Said Khan when confronted with the radiant face of the rider of Blue Stallion, was so spell bound that he fell at Guru's feet instantaneously, became his adherent and fought against his own former legions. Mughal court was not in the mood to condone this betrayal. Governor of the region was ordered to punish Budhu Shah and his family with death. Badr-ud-Din lovingly known as Budhu Shah remains prominent figure among the Muslim well wishers of the Gurus and the Sikhs in general.

On hearing his disciples, the Patthan soldiers had deserted the Tenth Master, he sternly told his own sons who were also on the battlefield to stick to the Guru. Four of them fell like heroes. After the battle was over, the Lord of the Khalsa honoured those who had helped him and survived. Budhu Shah was also present there among the congregation, his eyes glued to the face of the Master of the hawk.

"Your Holiness!"

Tenth Master lovingly called Budhu Shah, "What could be worthy of your status & sacrifice that you made in the noble cause of righteousness other than our heart felt love and gratitude."

"O Great One!" Budhu shah intoned with tears.. "Thy glance of affection and...."

"Go on, our dear friend."

"Would Thou be so kind as to grant me the gift of

sacred hair of Thy head, O Sire !"

"Pir Badar-ud-Din! Thou are a True Holy man – a lover of Prophet Muhammad God lives in Thee. Our House is eternally grateful to you--& so shall be our Khalsa. Thou shall live in the hearts and minds of our beloved Sikhs. Thou and thine house are redeemed. Almighty- Merciful God & Prophet Muhammad bless you and your community ever and ever with Grace." Tenth Master handed a lock of his hair to Pir Budhu shah.

Banda knew this all.



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Chapter 11

The Lord Departs

Sadhaura's Governor was duly punished for what he had done to Pir Budhu Shah. He was killed and his mansions reduced to ashes. Next, Banda proceeded to Banur-Chhat. It was here that he received the heart shattering news of his Mentor's departure. Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh had departed for the heavenly abode. What happened at Nander on Godawari Banks filled him with grief. Tears welled up in his eyes.

"The True Master of mine!" his voice choked up and tears began slowly roll down his face and so on his companions'.

In fact whole camp plunged into sorrow. Verses from the Holy Guru Granth Sahib were read. Divine Music was sung and prayers were afforded for days together. The stories of the Master were told and retold. Messenger from Nander thus told the tale of Guru's last days.

It so happened that Guru was relaxing one afternoon in his tent. Two singhs were on duty. A cool breeze coming from the waves of Godawari sort of soothed them into dozing. Meanwhile two Patthans, who would come regularly in the daily congregation and listened to Master's words sneaked through and stabbed him in the stomach. Guru, startled, cut down one assassin with his sword right away while the other fell prey to his body guards. Physicians were called in to operate upon the gushy wounds. It took about two months, to get cured. Everything was turning around. The messenger halted for a while.

"Then what happened?" asked some one among the listeners, sobbing.

"Emperor Bahadur Shah sent his own private physicians to tend to Guru's wounds. After about two months, a devotee came down with a bow and arrows. He had made that piece with utmost care and devotion particularly for the Master for he knew Guru's fondness for weapons. He presented it in the

full congregation. The Master very delighted, blessed the man. In the course of his daily prowling along Godawari and adjoining woods, the Master, one day, tried his hand on the bow. When he pulled it up, the *stomach* wounds opened up due to excessive strain. The attendants rushed up and sent for the physicians but the Master stopped them saying- now the time for departure has come and God's Will shall be done. In few days, there after, the Master installed Granth (Scripture) as the eternal Guru in his place with command, "From now on my soul shall reside in Guru Granth Sahib and my body in Panth- the collective existence of whole Sikh community." The messenger finished the tale among sobs, with quivering lips. The audience was stilled in silence but emotionally charged.

"Any clue as to who were the assassins?" asked Banda quietly.

"The rumour is that I believe is a fact, sir, they were hired by Wazir Khan the Governor of Sarhind."

"We shall see the fate of Sarhind is sealed anyhow," the gravity of Banda's tone struck everyone around him.

It took quite a while before Banda and his warriors began to recover from the shock waves of their beloved Guru's departure. Pall of gloom was confined to, not only Banda's camp, but the Sikhs everywhere felt the grief and bereavement. How would they, have the glimpse of the 'Divine Face' again and of whom? It was like their hearts had ceased to throb and brains function. They felt their lives had been rendered meaningless. Of all, Banda was affected by the catastrophe but as they say time is a great healer, he himself and whole community likewise slowly began to overcome the tragedy and come to grips with reality.

Banda, being a Yogi and proficient in meditation quickly gathered himself since he would have to present himself as a role model for the whole Panth at this very critical and emotional juncture. True, his beloved Mentor's sudden departure had shaken him to the roots for the bond of love between the preceptor and disciple was too tender and strong to suffer separation. Guru Gobind Singh's image

had gone too deep into Banda's heart and mind. It was not easy for him to pretend that to part is easy. But he was now, the temporal leader of his True Master's faithful. He was supposed to lead them, as enjoined by the Master as well as expected by his Sikhs in this hour of gloom and darkness on to the path of regeneration. Banda was, as chosen by the Creator of Khalsa, destined to lead them to their destiny. He shook himself up and accompanied by five councillors prayed before Guru Granth Sahib, for showing him the right path to march into future.

At the time of Banda's departure for Punjab, Guru Gobind Singh had issued edicts to the Sikh congregations scattered all over to rally under Banda's banner and assist him by whatever means available. The news of Banda Bahadur's daring exploits in the tract between Panipat & Sarhind to the south of Satluj spread like wildfire. People from far and near came to him in numbers but still Sikh habitants of Majha tract had not been able to reach him. Majha was the heartland, the very central piece of Punjab. Without their participation further Sikh conquest would not be that much glorious and meaningful whatsoever. Not only this, from military point of view, Banda badly needed a body of committed Sikh warriors in addition to his hotch potch and rag-tag militia thus far. So far he had stormed through southern Punjab in the form of sudden raider on localized governors and officials of the Mughal Empire without much resistance so to speak. But now his incessant raids and victories had begun to shake up the walls of Red Fort in Delhi. Intelligence reaching him daily pointed to the fact Delhi was getting agitated over his activities. A man of vision and foresight, he needed his forces more or less compatible with those of his antagonists' eventually. So without waiting further, he set about to send letters to the Sikh people to come to him with money, weapons and man-power to fulfil Tenth Master's mission.⁷

In response to his letters, the Sikhs from almost entire Punjab rushed to his camp. Malwa region was, of course, in the forefront since Banda began his campaign in that area extending from Panipat to the proximity of Satluj. Majhails and for that matter, Doabia Sikhs being under stern control of Lahore, found themselves quite hard pressed. Banda Bahadur understood fully well their precarious condition so he quite patiently yet eagerly awaited their arrival. So far his companions comprised an admixture of committed Khalsa warriors, paid mercenaries as well as those given to mere loot and boot. From among committed ones more or less Malwais formed the prominent group. Now for the forthcoming show down, Banda very much wanted to make it a decisive fight between collected Panth on one hand and the rulers of the day, the Mughal Empire on the other. If he was to claim the temporal leadership of whole Sikh community, it was essential he represented the Sikhs of all parts of Punjab. Since it was here, as commanded by the Tenth Master that the battle against tyranny and injustice was destined to be fought. Banda Bahadur did know this fully well too.

After a long wait, one day Majhails and Doobias crossed Satluj and were greeted with sky piercing slogans of 'Sat Sri Akal', 'Bole So Nihal'.

That night amidst all round jubilation, Banda convened special meeting of his war council. There was only one single item on the agenda: 'Sarhind'.



7 Seventh Master Guru Har Rai's prophecy about Baba Phool's descendants that their horses shall drink water from river Jamuna was about to be fulfilled.

Chapter 12

Sarhind - The Crown City

This is Sarhind. It literally means the head of Hindustan- India. Situated almost in the middle of highway between Lahore & Delhi, the city prided itself on being important and fabulous city for those who longed to step into real Hindustan. From modest beginnings, it blossomed into a mega city of 18 miles radius. With its splendid mansions, fragrance-packed gardens, hustle-bustle of bazaars and entertainment theatres, Sarhind had come to earn renown as a charming tourist resort. Caravans from Asia with stopovers Balakh, Bukhara, Kabul, Peshawar and Lahore would yearn to reach Sarhind and enjoy the festivities for days together before continuing their journey on to Delhi. Sarhind as a sub-province had gained into importance because of its geographical and political location. From the Shivalik foothills all through to the sands of Rajasthan, the area comprising southern Punjab was governed from here. Sarhind was the key point for imperial authorities to keep stern watch on hill princes as well as the Kashmir valley and region beyond. Mughal Court would see to it that a very competent, courageous and loyal governor took enviable position, so every occupant tried his best to add to Sarhind's beauty and prestige. With Wazir Khan's taking over the reins of administration, Sarhind touched the peaks of cultural amusement and royal glory.

Sarhind had had many attractions. One among them rather Solemn and sacred. Roza-i-Sharif- the Holy mausoleum was very prominent shrine of Naqash Bandi-branch of Muslim Sufi sects in northern India. It had its devotees, spread all through western Asia in addition to those from Punjab and northern India. Afghan ruling dynasties as well as nobility worshipped this place and their bodies after the death as a custom were brought over here for burial in the close vicinity of the sacred tomb.

One occupant of the sacred seat of the high priest of

the Mausoleum, Sheikh Ahmad Mujaddad Alaf Sani had come to acquire quite a name in so far as influencing the official policy of Mughal Emperor Jahangir in the opening years of seventeenth century. His followers with crusading spirit for Islam, occupied high positions throughout the Mughal domain. It was Sheikh Ahmad Sarhandi's vitriolic prompting that fired Jahangir's already made up fanatic tendencies against Guru Nanak's House to condemn Fifth Guru Arjun to death by tortures of Yasa, the Mongol code of penalty in 1606 A.D.⁸

New governor Wazir Khan, an able administrator as he was, was also known for harboring similar kind of attitude with regard to the progression of Islam. Naturally his thoughts and governing policies were likely to be influenced by the Naqash Bandi savant. Above all, defending Islam for him meant defending Empire and vice-versa.

Tall, well built and good looking Wazir Khan was one of rare class of men that give whole heartedly themselves to their vocation.

Sarhind a sub-province though, its geographical location stretching from the Shivalik foot-hills to the borders of Rajputana desert lent it special status. Whereas his inclinations kept him busy looking after Sarhind's beautification, as Subedaar (Governor), he was quite diligent in taking care of provincial affairs. Maintenance of law and order is, perhaps, the foremost duty of any administrator so to speak. Everything else, however sublime, serene or significant comes here after. Any disturbance big or small, in smooth running of social order, no ruler-royal or democratic, could afford to condone. People want peace and fear-free atmosphere for their daily life-style. Of course, perfect state of calm is impossible to achieve and keep up, the fact remains no government can allow lawlessness and disorder to prevail.

⁸ Shah's letter to Farid Bukhari alias Murtaza Khan who took Fifth Master into custody. Bukhari was a staunch disciple of Sheikh Sarhandi.

Wazir Khan was quite favoured by the stars as well as circumstances that made him a valuable almost indispensable official of Delhi Empire, for one thing in particular. He had had Anand Pur Sahib, in his jurisdiction. The town otherwise a replica of paradise on earth save for recent stirrings. Tenth Guru of the Sikhs had begun giving call to arms for resistance to tyranny & injustice of the rulers of the day.

An intelligent and foreseeing man as he was, the governor would not take news from Anand Pur lightly. He was well informed and well conversant with the House of the Sikh Gurus and its impact throughout Hindustan, and beyond, to Central Asia. Like his Master Emperor Aurangzeb, he would put everything that mattered in perspective especially in the context of safety and prolongivity of the Empire. It did not take him long to reach the conclusion. Anand Pur emerging was as the centre of popular rebellion against the Delhi throne. So, desperate measures, however merciless, must be taken to crush it, to nip in the bud, so to speak.

News from Deccan where the Emperor himself had been encamped for years past to curb the activities of Marhattas led by an energetic and able leader Shiva Ji further added to his anxiety. Mughal campaign against them had come to an impasse, of no win situation. Emperor's strong hand and manipulations had been successful to some extent to contain Marhatta uprising but the spark had not been fully extinguished. Aurangzeb's absence from the capital Delhi, further worsened the state of affairs and the resultant lack of proper and rapid communication between central and provincial- regional authorities gave rise to sort of autocratic tendencies among officials. Governor of Lahore, chiefs of hill states and imperial court at Delhi were pressing hard upon Wazir Khan to bring the Guru of Anand Pur to senses by whatever means possible. Consequently Wazir Khan aided by regular army, hill troops and militias as also drawing heavily upon false promises succeeded in getting Tenth Master, leave Anand Pur, one cold, windy night.

Wazir Khan knew fully well the worth & spiritual status of his opponent-Guru Gobind Singh. Above all, Guru's military prowess had astonished him more than anything else. During the siege of Anand Pur, Guru's commanding genius as opposed to his rival commanders came into full display. Tenth Master's arrows were taking heavy toll on the invading army in addition to Khalsa warriors' lightening raids, surrounded and hard pressed though. One report, among so many, extremely alarmed him. It so happened that, the news writer had written, that one afternoon chief commanders, both Mughal and Hill Rajas were playing chess under the shade of a tree with their respective soldiers around. They were all having good time especially with the realization, the months long siege had come to show desired results. The resistance had reduced to the minimum. The news from inside of the Fort of Anand Pur, Guru's residence, verified the ever-deteriorating plight of the inmates. They were further emboldened by the information recently received that there was sharp division within Guru's family and his close circle as to how to respond to invading commander's apparent offer of truce coupled with safe passage for Guru's entourage if and when he quit Anand Pur. Suddenly all laughter came to a stop. An arrow came in, shooting and got struck into the paw of big cot. Everybody got stunned.

"Thank God!" After momentary shock an officer pulled the arrow out. It was gold tipped.

"Oh! so this is Guru's arrow- how could he see us from such a distance." Mughal general wondered.

"He is a spiritual man, Sir," an attendant cried "and has got miraculous powers."

"Indeed- it is a miracle- Merciful God saved us- let us all be very very careful from now on." Commander had his words cut short half way, there came in another arrow from Anand Pur hillock. The attendants looked around apprehensively and reluctantly got it out. It was the similar one- gold tipped but with a piece of paper around its tip. "Khan Bahadur and Raja Sahib!" the attendant read it aloud,

"It is no miracle. It is the art of arrow shooting-archery."

Entire assembly got struck with awe and reverence. On hearing the account, Wazir Khan shook his head in sort of muted appreciation. He was one of the chosen ones who virtually ruled the Empire in Emperor's name though. He could appreciate the worth, excellence and greatness inherent in a person whether friend or a foe. He knew fully well how tremendous and multi-splendour the Sikh Guru was and how powerful impact he could exert on people at large.

Tenth Master's charisma would not excel in warfare alone. His humanism and benign treatment of all living beings irrespective of nature, cast and creed was equally compelling and his ethical standards uncompromising. One day, governor's -spy -cum news writer reported to him, some Khalsa warriors complained about a volunteer assigned for giving water to the fighting men, especially the wounded.

"Your Holiness! This man named Kanhayya is doing disservice to our cause."

"How so?" asked the Master.

"He serves our enemies water thus enabling them to fight with us again refreshed....."

"What do you have to say Bhai Kanhayya in this regard?"

"Your Holy Majesty!" Bhai Kanhayya spoke with folded hands, "When I am on the battlefield serving water to the fighters as ordained by you My Lord! I know no distinction in friend or foe. I just see a wounded soldier or the needy one. I see but thy face. I give him water. It is your teaching Sire."

"There is no enemy or stranger.

I treat every one with love and friendship."

"Wonderful! Bhai Kanhayya, thou stand blessed." Guru stood up. Took him in his embrace. "You are a true sikh. You have understood the true meaning and spirit of Sikhism, my brother. Keep up good work and have this box. In addition to water do rub this ointment on the wounded ones as well. May Guru Nanak bless you & God be with you." Tenth Master gave Bhai Kanhayya medical kit of first aid and blessed him."

All eyes turned toward him. Governor was enjoying the springtime of Sarhind's fabulous Aam-Khaas Bagh (Garden) accompanied by close circle of his courtiers. It was here that the messenger had given him the day by day account of Anand Pur battlefront. Wazir Khan was a man of calibre and had eye for the talent wherever it may be. Bhai Kanhayya & Tenth Master's dialogue had touched the bottom of his heart and he uttered.

"Marvellous." Wazir Khan cooed. It was such a spontaneous utterance as to get his audience surprised.

"Your Excellency!" Nawab of Malerkotla was first to ask, "such praise for an infidel and a rebel."

"This is the magic of the Sikh Guru Sir, he is quite adapt at making his foes love him." These were Diwan Sucha Nand's words.

"Of course, gentlemen, I was carried away with emotions momentarily." Wazir Khan realised by expressing his appreciation for his enemy's noble conduct, he had let emotions take better edge which is not at all desirable for an important officer of the Empire.

"We are all here, however," Wazir Khan cleared his throat, to consider about making next move in order to impress him with our sincerity and good faith so that he is inspired to quit his strong hold, the Fort of Anand Garh."

"The Guru is a real spiritual person, if we win his trust by a solemn act on our behalf, we might come to an understanding with him." Diwan Sucha Nand gave his honest opinion.

"And what that might be?" Wazir Khan enquired.

"How about sending him Holy Quran and sacred cow with promise of safe passage." Sucha Nand suggested.

"Hummmmm..," Governor hummed, "Are you sure, the Guru will accept this gesture."

"Since," Sucha Nand explained, "our motive is to get him out of his strong hold and a deeply religious person as he is, he will not refuse a solemn offer of peace, I firmly believe."

"But the use of Holy Quran and sacred cow is highly

objectionable when we are not going to abide by the spirit of this sacred gesture." Nawab Malerkotla expressed his dissent.

"I fully agree with you Sir!" Diwan Sucha Nand argued, "No one ought to abuse the scripture and sacred symbols. But we are in war and as the adage goes- everything is fair in love and war. This is our last weapon and taking cool and broad view of battlefield and range of time, I humbly insist we must go ahead with this."

"Sir," Diwan Todar Mal's voice rose, "we also have been taught by the wise ones- means must justify the end and not vice versa. But if the decision has to be made at all to do this as an expedient measure, I must say we should upkeep the sanctity of the gesture and keep our promise as to the safe passage."

"Oh, we will do it," Wazir Khan seemed relieved and turned to Malerkotla Chief, "and how about your opinion my friend?"

"Sir, I fully endorse Diwan Todar Mal's suggestion." Nawab of Malerkotla also gave his approval.

"So be it." Nawab Wazir Khan announced. Aam Khaas meeting adjourned.

Special meeting dispersed after having arrived at the unanimous decision. Soon afterwards however, governor called Sucha Nand and couple of other men his confidante wherein secret instructions were given to the commanders as well as Rajput chiefs to raid Guru's entourage after exiting Anand Pur Sahib and do the job to the finish. This was how Diwan Sucha Nand tactfully manoeuvred Diwan Todar Mal and Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan's acceptance of Wazir Khan's drive for final push to end the Anand Pur siege.

Rest of the narrative has become folklore as to what happened to Tenth Master, his family, four sons, old mother and number of companions. Although knowing fully well of his opponents' intentions and designs, the Master decided to go along with what his revered mother Gujri and close, faithful had been pressing upon him. Mughal commanders and hill chiefs duly sent Holy Quran and replica of sacred

cow with solemn pledge of safe passage. The Creator of the Khalsa quit Anand Pur Sahib in a dark stormy night and arrived at rivulet Sirsa. It was precisely at the bank of Sirsa that, in the early hours of the morning, Mughal- Rajput combined forces attacked. Khalsa warriors under Ajit Singh, Guru's eldest son's command engaged the enemy in a fierce battle. Guru sent his two wives along with Bhai Mani Singh toward Delhi. Old mother Gujri and two younger sons Zorawar Singh & Fateh Singh with Gangu, a butler, at their service went to Kheri, Gangu's village. While Master Himself, His two elder sons and a number of companions made way to a small fortress of Chamkaur in the darkness of night.

Tenth Guru's exit from Anand Pur & his wanderings through Chamkaur Sahib, Machhiwara's Jungle, Raikot, Dina Kangar, Mukatsar and finally to Talwandi Sabo (Dam Dama Sahib); this whole itinerary is studded with heart-wrenching events and sagas. Virtually, battle at Sirsa, two sons' heroic death at Chamkaur and Guru's two younger sons having had been bricked alive in Sarhind, Guru Ji's mother's death and so of hundreds of his faithful companions have gone down in history as the tale of seven bloody nights.

In all these painful tragedies, splendid and gallant however, Sarhind and its formidable governor played central role. Wazir Khan understood perfectly well that Emperor's being engaged in prolonged struggle against the Marhhattas in south had created a precarious condition in northern India, especially in Punjab. Delhi as usual was rampant with conspiracies and counter conspiracies by the self centred courtiers. Tenth Guru's creation of Khalsa, the governor viewed, was nothing short of death warrant of Mughal Empire. He looked upon himself next to the Emperor Aurangzeb, as the official who had been chosen by fate to defend the empire and more so, Islam. He also came to realize perfectly well that compared to Marhatta Chief Shiva Ji, he was by luck or bad luck pitted against far more formidable and worthy opponent, Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs. Of course, Shiva Ji was an able

leader and commendable military commander, the Guru on the other hand was an extraordinary commander, a literally genius and a true spiritual soul, all rolled into one;

In all these tragedies Wazir Khan, governor of Sarhind was the point man of the Mughal Empire pitted against the Creator of the Khalsa. Acting on 'holier than thou' axiom he as often as not, over-stepped his authority and over-zealously tried to implement Imperial policy as well as orders as how to deal with the Guru.

On long highway from Anand Pur to Dam Dama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo) in southern Punjab near Bhatinda, the last battle was fought in the sands surrounding a pool of water known as Khidrane Di Dhaab. It was here that Tenth Master's forty deserters along with several other devotees gave a pitched battle to the chasing Sarhind troops. The Master, once again rained down his arrows on the chasers that forced them to halt their operation. All those dedicated ones fell on the battlefield like heroes. Master came down from his camp at a sandy hillock. Deeply moved by the heroic sacrifices of devotees, especially the deserters under Mahan Singh's command, he blessed them with his grace. They were called the "liberated ones". Meanwhile Imperial messengers caught up with the royal troops with instructions to cease hostility and leave Guru alone. The Master proceeded to Talwandi Sabo for a prolonged respite. His wives from Delhi came over. It was a touching family reunion since all of four Guru's sons were missing.

That unknown dwelling place and pool, "Khaidrane di Dhaab" is now famous in the world as "Mukatsar" (The Pool of salvation). Every first day of month of Magh (Middle January) is commemorated as "Maaghi".

What caused cessation of hostilities is not much known. Some historic facts serve as pointers however. Soon afterwards Guru's younger sons had been bricked alive, Nawab of Malerkotla wrote a personal letter to Aurangzeb in which he regretfully explained the inhuman conduct of the governor of Sarhind with regard to the young princes and

their aged grandmother. He also advised his nephew, who was already facing hardships in Deccan to go lenient on the Sikh Guru & send an invitation for dialogue instead of military action. Furthermore, Sher Muhammad⁹ wrote, Imperial objective had already been achieved since Guru of the Sikhs was now all alone by himself and had been rendered a harmless person. The Emperor hard pressed as he already was subsequently ordered the truce and sent invitation to the Guru for personal talk in Deccan.

Tenth Master as a matter of historic fact, received two invitations from the Emperor. While gracefully accepting the gesture, Guru in his unique style penned his answer in poetic Persian in the form of letters going down in history as Zafarnameh (the epistle of victory).¹⁰

Master accordingly set out on journey southward that terminated in Nander¹¹ - Deccan (Hazur Sahib) on Godawari banks. While at Baghaur in Rajasthan, he received the news of Emperor Aurangzeb's death, followed by war of succession among Aurangzeb's sons that ended up in Prince Muazzam's succeeding to the Mughal throne as emperor Bahadur Shah. Shri Guru Gobind Singh is said to have helped him at Bhai Nand Lal's counsel. Bahadur Shah obviously indebted to the Guru, however failed to keep his word as promised through Bhai Nand Lal. Creator of the Khalsa spent his last days at Nander. There he chose next leader & installed "Granth Sahib" as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs and ultimately fell to the dagger of an assassin.

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Whereas Sarhind was sort of command centre for

9 Nawab Sher Mohammad is said to be an uncle of Mughal Emperor i.e. Aurangzeb's mother's sister's husband. Maasarh in Punjabi family terminology.

10 Some historians are of the opinion that Guru wrote two letters in reply to the two imperial invitations and other letter was called Fatehnamah. But in the history either one or both letters combined as one are known as Zafar Nameh.

11 Nander- Now popularly known as Hazur Sahib, a Takhat (Royal Throne) world-wide. Previously in Hyderabad state, now this Holy Shrine is part of Maharashtra state.

political and military actions against the Lord of Anand Pur, it was also one of the centres of guidelines that influenced the religious policy of the Mughal Empire especially after Akbar the Great. Being a stronghold and shrine of Naqash Bandi Sufi sect, it was given a flip in importance by Sheikh Ahmad Mujaddad Alf Sani & his descendants. It was Sheikh Sarhandi at whose behind the scene, however remote, instigation, emperor Jahangir ordered Fifth Guru Arjun's, death by torture of Yasa. Almost all royal orders for Sikhs' annihilations, although issued from Delhi or Lahore from time to time, apparently, had had the imprint of Sheikh Sarhandi's instructions.

So, in a way, from both religious and political aspects, the Ahmed Sarhandi spear headed the campaign that had only one, sole objective, the destruction of the Guru's House and their fellowship i.e. the Sikh community. After Tenth Master's departure at Nander to the Realm of Truth, the Sikhs were bound to come into clash with Sathind and its rulers. That was exactly what Banda Singh & his hordes did.

So, right at his start from Nander Deccan, Banda also had single most target, Sarhind. After having had trounced the tract of Punjab between Delhi and Satluj, his focus now was Sarhind.

On Khalsa's tryst with destiny, Banda's five council, with everyday passing, was pressing upon him to take the field at the earliest. He would listen to them calmly and advise them to be little more patient for, in his insightful view, battle of Sarhind was definitely going to be decisive one that would, in all likelihood, rewrite the history of India. He would tell them the forthcoming clash between Sarhind and his forces ought to be a full fledged and pitched battle and not merely a skirmish, a raid or hit and run stuff. The battlefield around Sarhind must decide the fate of who would rule the fortune of this land- justice or tyranny? So Banda Singh will wait and make preparations as also give time to his opponent governor Wazir Khan to do the same and when the moment was right, Khalsa shall strike.

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Chapter 13

The Conqueror of Sarhind

This is Aam Khaas Bagh- a garden, the beauty of Sarhind. It is in full bloom and appears to be a piece of 'Jannat' (paradise on earth). Governor Wazir Khan was very fond of this place and took special care to make it look like that way all year long. Accompanied by his closest courtiers and advisers, governor while having gentle stroll, savouring the fragrant scene, was also absorbed in rather an urgent matter. He had just received very sensitive intelligence from Banda's head-quarter. Disturbed Wazir Khan summoned his courtiers to a conference in Aam Khaas Bagh.

This is "Chapparr-jhirri". A long and vast expanse of flat land with intermittent bushes, trees and farms looks like vast playground hinged by scattered villages. The field named after an unknown village, a cluster of few huts and homes had had a pool of water and a grove of trees, hence the name Chapparr-jhirri. However, the village was about to earn world-wide fame for times to come. Clothed in obscurity, Chapparr-jhirri was soon to erupt into celebrity as the battlefield of the aroused common masses against the mightiest empire of the world of the time.

Banda's camp was located at the south-eastern fringe of Chapparr-jhirri, where as, Wazir Khan chose as head-quarters a suitable spot to the north-west.

It was the final night. Discussion after discussion, plan after plan taking all contingencies and eventualities into account had ultimately come to an end. Now was the moment of action. Banda Singh summoned his war council of five selected ones followed by general assembly of commanders and subordinates. In the ambrosial hours of early morning, special congregation was held in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, prayers were offered and with first ray of dawn, Khalsa warriors majestically marched under saffron flags toward the battlefield of Chapparr-jhirri.

For Wazir Khan, this was also a fateful night. Heretofore, he had fought numerous battles, but never felt the way he was feeling this night. Some mysterious voice from his inner-core constantly nagged at him that the next morning was about to see him in the pitch of life and death battle. Not only for his person strictly speaking but the very fate of the Grand Mughal Empire rested upon its outcome. In order to strengthen his resolve and embolden his nerves, he spent more than usual time in prayer, reading Holy Quran, got attuned with Prophet Muhammad. He, like a humble momin (a faithful Muslim) beseeched victory.

How Wazir Khan's prayer and his counterpart Banda's supplications to his Lord- the Tenth Master respectively worked and were responded to is an eternal mystery. But one thing for sure what history of human beings tells is about righteousness and dedication of those who commit themselves to a cause. How things are decided in the Court Divine, nobody however great or sublime can fathom but reality on ground and the zest and zeal of people fighting for the cause could definitely decide the fate of future. This is what exactly happened on the battlefield of Chapparrjhirri.

Wazir Khan was fighting for the defence of excesses and cruelty of Mughal Empire in the name of dignity of ruling class and faith of course where as Banda's warriors were out there to avenge the atrocities of the rulers in the name of justice and human dignity. Nevertheless, material realities had to be taken into account. Mughal army was one of the seasoned, centuries old institution as opposed to Banda's ragtag bands of peoples with additional juntas of looters and mercenaries.

These were the circumstances when with day-break, battle broke out. Warriors on both sides left no stone unturned to beat the opponent. As the noon sun tilted toward evening, Wazir Khan's troops appeared to dominate the field. Banda's forces began to disperse, first among them the looters followed by mercenaries. Field commanders, sent an urgent message to Banda Singh for immediate help.

"Sir, battlefield is not favouring us. It appears Mughal army is going to...."

"Not any more good soldier," Banda cut in, "The Lord of arrows is definitely with his Khalsa."

With these words Banda took one arrow from the pack of blessed five from his quiver and put it into bow. With closed eyes and heart glued to his Master's feet murmured, "O Lord of the Khalsa! Grant us victory." He shot the arrow into the firmament. Mounted on his stallion and dashed on to the battlefield followed by his special squad. As soon as he entered his ranks amid the slogans of 'Bole So Nihal- Sat Sri Akal', the battle took a lightening turn. Wazir Khan's troops felt as if their feet had been blocked by a powerful force began to retreat. Banda's presence electrified the battlefield and wrote the feeling of Sarhind. Retreating and dispersing haphazardly, his warriors as though enforced by a mysterious force, rallied behind the saffron flag and pushed the enemy on to flee. Wazir Khan tried to hold on but in-vain. He found himself surrounded by his wretched enemies- the ragtag of ruffians, as he used to call them. His head got chopped off along with those of his son and son-in-law. Wazir Khan, however cruel and wicked, died a soldier's death and a loyal defender of his Master's realm. Khalsa won the day and a decisive victory over its tormentors in an open and well fought battle. Sarhind, the crown of Mughal Empire was now in Khalsa's hands, Banda its master.

"Let the monument of tyranny, be wiped out of the surface.!" Banda commanded. His words set the conquerers onto a spree.

A reign of terror was let loose. Banda himself had galloped back to his headquarters leaving behind his warriors to deal with the matter at hand. In the turmoil that followed, destruction of life, beauty, wealth, art and art-culture beyond any scale took place. At the same time acts of mercy, benevolence and human compassion occurred in abundance also. People like Diwan Sucha Nand, whose advice Wazir Khan adhered to were duly punished, while those opposed to

this cruelty like Diwan Todar Mal were rewarded instead. Within the span of couple days and hours, the crown city of proud Wazir Khan turned into vast heap of rubble. But still Sarhind was Sarhind of course. Conquerers' initial fury and lust of spoils gave way to the majesty of the city that compelled them to treat the precious monuments, gardens and palaces bit more aesthetically. One such palace is 'Rauza - i-Sharif- Holy tomb.' Khalsa warriors had no idea what to do with that: pull down or keep in-tact. A messenger was sent to the generalissimo. Simmering hatred yielded to solemn reflections.

"What now?" Banda enquired.

"There is a Muslim holy place, a mausoleum, Sir."

"I see..." Banda long hummed.

"Let there be no harm to holy shrines and sacred places. Operation comes to halt instantly. Rauza must not be touched at all"

In fact this was all done according to Banda's well thought out policy. Destruction & killings, were not sort of acts of vendetta but constituted, first a stern warning to the cruel rulers that they shall have to face the rod of justice one day. Secondly, it was for the world to know that this was the call of new revolution by the common, ordinary people. Operation overhauling Sarhind was stopped. Banda gave himself up to the serious business of putting new machinery of administration, the mini state of the Khalsa in place. Baj Singh was appointed Governor of Sarhind. Likewise Samana and Thanesar were placed under Sikh Governors. First order of business was to pull down the walls in which younger sons of the Tenth Master were bricked alive. Banda did this with his own hands and erected new edifice. 'Fateh Garh' (The Fort of Victory), in its place and hoisted saffron flag. Sarhind was pulled back into orderly fashion and normalcy of life restored with the same intensity as destruction after victory at Chapparr-jhirri. This was a credit to Banda's genius that he soon realised that it was easier to destroy than to build. Destruction must give way to reconstruction if new

conquerers aimed at governance and were desirous of giving the poor people tormented already by the vanquished, a new life- the life of peace, plenty and freedom. An order was issued to the effect- anyone, no matter who, found engaged in any kind of unlawful activity especially disturbing peace shall be punished severely. It took no time for Sarhind to feel hustle and bustle once again. Banda- the conquerer of Sarhind moved onto Mukhlis Garh, a fortress into the deep Shivalik.

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Chapter 14

Khalsa Shall Rule

This is Mukhlis Garh. An obscure but formidable fort surrounded by Shivalik hills. Not very far from Sarhind, it served as the governing post for hill states of Himalayas under Sarhind and Lahore.

As for its choice to serve as the capital of rebellious Sikh state in the vast ocean of Mughal Empire, it is suffice to say that Banda Singh was not merely a Yogi, a fighter and a military tactician but an administrative genius also. Mukhlis Garh epitomised his vision of Sikh state in terms of security. Nearby was Anand Pur Sahib, the birthplace of Khalsa and the beloved city of His Mentor, the Tenth Master. It was also secure from military point of view. Safe, considerably immune to any Imperial retaliation that was about to come sooner or later.

The fort was surrounded on three sides by impenetrable lower Himalayan ranges with a rivulet behind, that could provide an escape route in time of emergency. Mukhlis Garh was renamed as Loh Garh (Fort of Iron) under saffron flag. Banda proclaimed it to be the head quarters of Khalsa rule & struck the coin of sovereignty,

Siqqah Zad Bar Har Do Alam, Tegh-i-Nanak Wahib Ast.

Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shaban, Fazl-i-Sacha Sahib Ast.

Other Side

Zarb Ba Aman-ud-Dehar Musawarrat, Shehar Zeenat-ul-Takhat-i-Mubarak Bakhat

Coin one side:- *The power of the sword granted by Guru Nanak won the two worlds. Guru Gobind Singh- the King of the Kings- always victorious by the Grace of the True Lord.*

Other Side: *Issued from the beautiful capital of Good Fortune, a place of peace and joy for the world.*

Seal: *"Degh-O- Tegh-O- Fateh - Nusrat Bedrang II
Yaafat Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh II*

May victory be achieved in nourishing the forsaken and annihilating the wicked with the imminent grace of Guru Nanak & Guru Gobind Singh. May the Immortal God be the Constant Helper!

Royal seal with inscription was also issued as the seal of prosperity and happiness for one and all. Khalsa rule's proclamation, *"Let every one enjoy the boom of freedom without discrimination."*

Sarhind had come fully under the saffron flag. Sikh alias Khalsa rule established its authority throughout the length and breadth of the province that measured approximately 150X50 square miles in area. Sarhind was located geographically in between Delhi and Lahore. Its importance as to the political spectrum of India, especially northern Hindustan was of historical magnitude. Banda with his Master's blessings and prophetic intuition coupled with his companions' council performed a miracle: a revolutionary act. Land was given to the tillers, ploughmen and farmers, Beginning his campaign of 'uproot the tyranny' right from the border line storming through its significant places, ultimately capturing Sarhind. After putting new administration- the Sikh style in place ushering in the Sikh way of rule, Banda now found himself occupied with his future plans should he remain in Mukhlis Garh- the capital of buddy Sikh state and look after the consolidation of his conquests in political as well as governing terms or march further on. He himself was a restless soul, so were his comrades, fighters & followers: The Khalsa as well as mercenaries. Moreover, as a man of vision and deep meditation, he was fully conscious of what fate awaited him.

In the long run his state was an island in ocean of Mughal Empire of Hindustan. Sooner than later, imperial reaction was imminent but before that should he wait for the outcome or else. He could not and he would not. Delhi and Lahore two Imperial strongholds were out of question. Third option was to venture into Gangetic valley across Jamuna. And exactly this was what he did.

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Chapter 15

Gang-O-Jamun Valley

Banda crossed Jamuna river at Yamuna Nagar. Like a whirlwind, his warriors transversed whole Ganga- Jamuna valley. Those who surrendered were pardoned but those who resisted were put to sword. Banda's main targets would always be cruel and debauch rulers no matter what race or faith they belonged to. Pardon brought wealth of course as well so direly needed by his troops and protection to the people affected by his raids. This stretch of land in between the rivers of Jamuna and Ganges and beyond eastwards formed the heart land of northern India. Banda wanted to shake this up so that he could stir up the dead bones of Hindustanis. Sikh rule's policies were implemented in the wake of each victory. Peace, protection of life, honour, prosperity and suitable Nazraana (tribute) to the Khalsa. Every thing was going so well. Banda's all conquering troops before long came to encamp at the banks of Gangeshawar. Some very disturbing news from Sarhind reached him. Imperial forces were reported to be on move against Mukhlis Garh, his capital.

"What to do my friends?" he asked his advisory council.

"Your Eminence! we should continue our march ahead across Ganges."

"No, it is not proper course to be taken."

All others unanimously intoned, "We need to rush back and defend Loh Garh."

"Let us wait for a while and get firm information. For the time-being, stay here and savour the juice of conquests." Banda commanded.

Troops began to relax accordingly.

Days of uncertainty and indecision were very heavy and seemingly lingering on. But mother nature intervened to end the drudgery and inactivity so to speak. Heavy rains began and continued for days together. Marching forward across Ganges was not possible for a considerable time.

"Well my friends, the Providence has come to our help to solve our dilemma. In face of constant rain and paths blocked with water all around especially toward Ganges and

beyond have left us none but only one option.

“Very true Sir.”

Banda Singh said, “Moreover news from Sarhind and Delhi are getting alarming everyday.”

“Leaving our aims about Ganges in suspension for the time being. I think we should hurry back to Sarhind & Mukhlis Garh with the first ray of dawn.”

The resounding shouts- 'Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal' were heard all across the camp. Banda retired to his chamber. Sat in meditating posture, soft prayers began to hum across his lips.

“O Lord of Khalsa! Shower Your Grace on your Banda to face what the future he has in store. Thy Will be done, O Master.”

Night slowly took Khalsa camp into its embrace. In Intermittent rain, and lightening and thunder kept all through on.



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Chapter 16

The Empire Strikes Back

This is Rajputana alias Rajasthan. The desert land of the Rajputs and home of the ceremony of 'johar' in which brave ladies of royal families committed suicide in stunningly dignified manner to keep their honour in tact and that of their honourable families. There was time almost entire Hindustan was ruled by Rajputs. Mythology has this to tell that once upon a time of utter helplessness and despair, holy men prayed for days together at Mount Abu and that at the end of their sacrificial rituals they threw all sacred stuff into a huge pit of fire i.e. Yagya. There came four persons out of the mammoth flame. They became ancestors of Rajputs whose task it was to defend the land and upkeep the honour of their families. Those four came to be known as Chauhan, Parmar, Solanski & Parihar. Given to arms, they soon subjugated whole of India & became its masters. Their families' trees flourished abundantly to give birth to several Rajput dynasties that ruled this sub-continent for centuries. Then the wheel of fortune turned other way around. Muslim invaders from the north west began to pour into and became rulers of Hindustan. Of course, valiant rulers like Prithvi Raj Chauhan tried their best to checkmate them but were outmanouvred and completely lost in the final showdown owing to primarily disunity among themselves as also the firey zeal of the invaders. Although Muslims conquered all of India yet, Rajputana, the home of proud Rajputs, in the history of Muslim lordship of India, is found to be a thorn in side of rulers of Delhi, whoever that may be. In the beginning years of Grand Mughal empire, Rajputana once again true to convention became pain in the neck.

It is not that Rajputana & its rulers were always a boiling pot. Good rulers pacified them and had had them on their side to fight their battles. To name among a few who endeared themselves with the Rajputs, name of Akbar, the great Mughal stands prominently out. Although Grand Mughal Empire of Zaheer-ul-Din Babar , the conquerer and founder remained on friendly terms with Rajputs. During

Emperor Jahangir's & Shah Jahan's reign also, there has never been perfect peace in the land of desert princes. One or two or more Rajput Princes at times raised the flag of revolt. Even though Emperor Akbar cemented Mughal dynasty's alliance with Rajput princes by means of tactical diplomacy coupled with pragmatic policy of matrimonials with Rajput princesses, the Grand Mughal had had to fight a prolonged battle with Maharana Partap of Chittore- The darling of Rajput history. Despite the fact, his son and successor. Emperor Jahangir's mother was Jodha Bai, a Rajput Princess and her brother Raja Man Singh virtually the commander-in-chief of imperial army, Rajputana remained a trouble spot for the empire. During the reign of Aurangzeb the last great Mughal emperor, Rajputsana began to stir up imperceptibly though. But once again emperor's foxy tactics and strong hand kept them under check and virtually used them for the security of his empire hinged upon Rajputs' instinctive loyalty. Raja Ram Singh was sent to the easter fringes of Hindustan-who accomplished his mission successfully with the blessings of ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur who happened to be in that region on his missionary tour. Ram Singh like several other Rajput Princes, was a devotee of Guru's House.¹²

Since their downfall from supremacy in India or even before that it was disunity and kind of fratricidal tendency that proved a curse for Rajput Princes. Individually very brave and embodiment of valour and chivalry, they failed to muster a united stand against the invaders and fell one by one before them. Nevertheless, amber of freedom and honour was always out there and blasted at occasions. Aurangzeb's death and subsequent war of succession among Emperor's sons afforded some Rajput Princes another opportunity to challenge the Mughal might. Muazzam renamed as Emperor Bahadur Shah as the winner of brothers' contest had to grapple with this urgent matter so vital as well as threatening

12 Dhobri Sahib, a Gurdwara built in sweet memory of the event stands on the bank of river Brahm Putra till today.

to the Empire. That is why he broke dialogue with Tenth Master when both had had encamped at the banks of Godawari and mutual talk at settling off contentious issues between Delhi and the Lord of Anand Pur were almost in final stage. Added to it was new Emperor's submissiveness to anti-Guru lobby of Mughal Court that made Tenth Master take decisive measure to part ways with Bahadur Shah and choose independent line of action. Pursuant to that policy, Banda had come to Punjab and dealt severe blows to the Empire. Right from Panipat to Sarhind and across Jamuna up to Ganges an expansive tract had been occupied by the Khalsa and brought under sovereignty of saffron flag. Devastating news reached Emperor's camp in Rajputana that had by then been to some extent pacified. The news was just like a bolt from the blue. Emperor flew into rage.

"Who is this Banda?" Bahadur Shah shouted.

"Your Majesty! He is famous Yogi- Madho Das Bairaagi of Deccan. But during his last days at Nander, the Sikh Prophet Guru Gobind Singh cast his spiritual spell over him. Madho Das became his Sikh and was commissioned by his mentor to uproot the rule of tyranny." Muhammad Munim Khan, Emperor's closest adviser and commander-in-chief of the Imperial Army briefed his master.

"You know our rule, the Great Mughal Empire...!"

"Yes Your Majesty! Not only this, Sikh Guru has also instructed him to establish his own rule. The Khalsa government that he fancifully named as the rule of justice, fairness, peace and love."

"Of course the Guru was a man of God and we are indebted to Him and His Khalsa for what they did for us in the war of succession. It was his help and blessing that turned the tide of victory in our favour as opposed to Tara Azam, may his soul rest in peace. But this rebellion at the behest of his followers can not be permitted and must be crushed." New Emperor of Hindustan sternly said.

"Undoubted Your Majesty! This Banda is not merely a rebel and crusader, He is a monster". From the reports

reached Delhi and there from here, now at the Imperial camp, I, the humble servant of thine, may submit the whole tract between Delhi and river Satluj has been ravaged by his hordes. All officials of Panipat, Samaana, Sadhaura, Banur and above all Governor Wazir Khan of Sarhind met horrible fate at his hands.'

"Ah Wazir Khan! ! We mourn his loss. He was a loyal servant and valiant man. Allah the Great/ bless his soul eternal peace!" Emperor aggrieved, raised his hands in prayer.

Emperor's order was put into rapid practice word by word. Almost entire military force of Mughal Hindustan was mobilised. It comprised the Imperial army, Rajputana's choicest fighters and contingents from as far as Hyderabad Deccan. Bahadur Shah himself chose to be in supreme command with Muhammad Munim Khan, the commander-in-chief as his deputy responsible for combat and tactical operations. In post haste, Bahadur Shah arrived near his capital, Delhi but instead of entering the Imperial city, new Emperor circuited around, marched straight ahead toward Karnal, Panipat and so forth. The Sikh governors did put up effective resistance but having been heavily outnumbered and outsourced evacuated. their strongholds and rushed to Mukhlis Garh, their own capital and met the Mughal forces under Banda's own command who had reached there a short while ago from Ganga - Jamuna Valley.

Although Mughal army almost recaptured whole of Sarhind province, but entire hierarchy of Mughal Empire right from top to bottom, the Empire himself and foot soldiers on the battlefield, was stunned at the way and the spirit with which Khalsa warriors greeted the Imperial onslaught. They were fewer in number but bolder in spirit. Moreover they were all fired by the flame of freedom and no power on earth could extinguish that. Anyhow, despite nurturing sentiments of praise for their foe, Imperial forces as they were out there to crush the revolt kept up their advance with heavy casualties though, succeeded in surrendering Loh Garh, the city of Khalsa rule & Banda

Singh's strong hold.

Loh Garh- literally the fort of iron virtually proved, unapproachable and impenetrable. Mughal army had retaken as much easily the territory as conquered by Banda Singh but not Loh Garh. True to name, it stood in defiance. Months passed by, Imperial army had bogged down in prolonged siege with no end in sight. Although Sarhind province, evacuated by new conquerers was retaken very easily but Loh Garh, the strong hold of the rebels, nay the capital of newly established Sikh State stood defiant right in front of innumerable, supposedly invincible army, right before Emperor's eyes, Emperor the son of Aurangzeb, the Great Mughal.

"Munim Khan", Bahadur Shah's wrath knew no bounds, "What is happening? We the inheritor of grand Mughal Empire of our ancestors- their Majesties Babur, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and our own father Aurangzeb; with this enormous army, we cannot capture a tiny creature?"

"I am ashamed, Your Majesty! But the Sikh monster seems to have miraculous powers as people talk about." Amin Khan was embarrassed indeed.

Nonsense- Empires and Governments cannot tolerate this stupidity. If we could make Guru Gobind Singh- blessed be his name, who was indeed a man of God to quit Anand Pur, who is this Banda compared to him?"

"Very true Your Majesty! We have tried our best. The combined forces of entire Hindustan with valiant Rajputs, are pitted against Banda and his handfuls. Yet we are unable to make headway. There is something mysterious about him, Your Majesty!

"May be, but we cannot afford to let this go on indefinitely. This is now or never situation. Munim Khan, we cannot eat, we cannot sleep. As a matter of fact wretched Banda's excursions have soured the juice of victory of the crown of Hindustan."

"Indeed Your Majesty ! We are going to make another raid in now or never spirit" Munim Khan said.

"Almighty Allah protect you !" Bahadur Shah dismissed his general.

Inside the four walls of Loh Garh, a different kind of scenario was being enacted. Surrounded by his advisory council and warriors, Banda Singh looked grim but calm and fearless.

"Sir ! Imperial army is inching toward Loh Garh in slow march." Intelligent officer informed.

"We sure believe this is their final and full assault. Mughal honour is at stake my friend." Banda Singh's tone was serene.

"Let us do what our Master- the Creator of Khalsa did in Garrhi Chamkaur." Binod Singh cut in.

"Sure that we must do. Time for withholding and for stalling is over. Now the moment is for gallantry. Khalsa must prove to its friends and foes alike what our Lord enjoined upon us." Banda answered.

"Call to the battlefield is what fires a warrior's heart." These were Kahn Singh's words.

"That we shall do but rather in a different way." Banda Singh's voice was determined, decisive with a tinge of cheerfulness. His audience was a bit perplexed as to their commander-in-chief's tone.

"My dear Khalsa, our Lord, the True Master has also taught us as to how to baffle the enemy. We will play such a wondrous feat that will make, new Emperor look like a fool and he will go crazy." Banda smiled a little. His eyes dreamy and face beaming with a spiritual aura.

"Your command will be done, Sir." A unanimous echo arose. The war council was dismissed

Mughal army eventually captured Loh Garh. Muhammad Munjm Khan escorted by his bodyguards entered spacious courtyard with a broad smile on his battle scarred face. As he looked around, his smile instantly evaporated. There was not a single human body living or dead. Carcasses of dead horses and sacs of rations only.

"Go around and search." he shrieked in rage

"Never mind commander-in-chief." a voice struck his ears.

There came out a majestic looking person accompanied by a number of comrades in arms.

"So here you are at long last Banda, the wretched rebel." Munim Khan stepped forward a bit baffled. He had hoped to find his opponent, the source of so much trouble the Mughal Empire half dead, dissipated and begging for mercy.

"No Sir, a humble servant of my chief, my name is Gulab Singh and these are my companions."

"Where is Banda?" Munim Khan screeched his teeth.

"Oh, he has flown out?" Gulab Singh smiled, a combination of mockery and defiance.

"You will burn in hell! and put them in shackles." He commanded.

Immediately Gulab Singh & companions were put in chains. Soon afterwards they were brought before Bahadur Shah. Emperor was informed of the fall of Loh Garh and of the reality of the prisoner's identity.

'Gulab Singh! Men like you, so brave and faithful deserve our praise and forgiveness, even reward for gallantry," Bahadur Shah addressed the prisoner a bit emotionally. "But you are a rebel in our Empire. So you must realise the blame for this is on your leader who left you behind and escaped."

'No Your Majesty! we implored our great leader to go away and keep the flame of freedom ablaze. We offered ourselves to die in his place." Gulab Singh answered boldly with pride.

Bahadur Shah dismissed the prisoners with heavy heart.



Chapter 17

The Hawk flew Away.....

The Emperor now turned toward Munim Khan.
"So the hawk flew away."
"Yes Your Majesty! The hawk flew away."

"This is your great service," sarcasm in Emperor's voice was not lost on Munim Khan.

"Full might of the great Mughal Empire could not defeat a few hundreds of rebels- and that Banda the wretched, slipped."

"I am so ashamed, Your Majesty!"

"So you should be! May we know why this happened. Such humiliation of invincible Mughal army." Emperor was boiling with anger.

"Your Majesty! there are rumours about Banda that he is a magician and in possession of miraculous powers."

"Stop this non-sense Munim Khan. Empires cannot and do not survive this way."

"But Your Majesty! My audacity may be excused; in spite of everything in our hands how could he have escaped." Munim Khan tried to rationalize his failure.

By same argument, how would our gallant commander account for Banda's total loss. All of Sarhind province our forces have recaptured. Where was his magic then?

"I am at a loss Your Majesty and beg for your forgiveness." Munim Khan had nothing else to offer.

"This disgrace at the beginning of our reign- men of honour rather prefer to die than to suffer this fate." Emperor's words struck his audience like thunderbolt. Munim Khan took them to his heart and suffered nervous break down. Although Bahadur Shah pardoned him and became lenient to his old servant and seasoned commander and tried to cheer him up with gifts, but Jumlat-Ul- Mulk Munim Khan, Khan-i-Khanan, Wazir-i-Hind could not recover from this shock and died shortly.

Audience was dismissed. Bahadur Shah lost his senses. Banda had broken the myth of Mughal invincibility. Otherwise loyal and able officer, Munim Khan took the shock to heart and unlimtely to his soul. He died soon. This

was first extraordinary casualty of battle against Banda Bahadur. Second perhaps the greatest casualty was the Emperor himself. He went berserk and taking leave of all his mental faculties his rage and frustration took a crazy turn. Having failed to bring wretched Banda to face Mughal wrath, he turned maniacal. Emperor issued an urgent order to the effect.

“Let the followers of Nanak, wherever they may be found, be killed !”

The shock of Banda's escape was so overwhelming that Bahadur Shah seemed to have no other business of government except death by order. In mania he ordered all the dogs be killed.

Munim Khan's death was another blow that inched Bahadur Shah toward his own death. Before he had had last breath of his mortal life on this planet he had appointed Muhammad Amin Khan as grand wazir of the Empire as well as commander-in-chief of Mughal Army. with strict orders to crush wretched Banda and his companions in such horrible manner 'that world would never forget'.

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Chapter 18

In Central Punjab- Majha & Doaba

Sarhind conquest stirred up Sikhs of central Punjab as well to raise the flag of revolution. Almost eight thousands of them gathered at Amritsar and decided to march into Riarki area around Gurdaspur. Local officials tried to stop the new storm but in vain. Batala, Pathankot, Kalanaur all fell one after other. Sikh militants even dared to infiltrate Shahdara, the outskirts of Lahore. Kalanaur, of all the new conquests was a major victory for it was here that Akbar, the great Mughal, then a boy of sixteen, was crowned as the Emperor of Hindustan.

Aslam Khan, the Lahore Governor was so terrified as never to quit the Royal fort. His otherwise tricky brain helped him to listen to those who were eager to give call for 'Jihad'- Muslim religious fight and rapidly agreed to do the same. Sooner than later Haidari flag was seen roaming all over under which zealots goaded by Maulanas, Maulawis and fanatic headmen began to comb the area.

The Sikhs had, in order to face challenge, themselves organised in four batches. There were a few skirmishes at Bhagwant Rai fortress, Kotli Begum, Bhilowal which ended up in getting Sikhs upper hand but on the whole it was kind of drawn out struggle. Nevertheless, fresh Sikh victories remained in tact.

Doaba Sikhs also felt emboldened and fell upon 'Rahon' an ancient town of considerable wealth and repute. Shammas Khan was the governor of Jalandhar tract known as Doaba who lived in Sultan Pur. He came off a great family of Khilji Pathaans of Kasoor. He was a seasoned politician also. Sikh leaders sent him an ultimatum -either peaceful surrender or fighting. He cleverly responded with a few loads of presents for the Sikhs and thus bought time for battle preparation. He also collected crowds of Jihad in addition to regular troops. In a fierce battle, Shammas Khan with difficulty succeeded in ousting the Sikhs from their trenches. His forces occupied Rahon. Meanwhile other Sikh Jathas occupied Jalandhar. Next was the turn of Hoshiarpur and Phagwara. Barring Sultan Pur and Rahon, almost all Doaba

tract was now under Sikh supremacy.

Doabia Sikhs now turned their sight on Bilas Pur and other Himalayan Rajput principalities popularly known 'Hilly Bae- Dhaar'-about 22 chiefs ruled in this hilly area. Kehlor, much like Sarhind was sore in Sikh eyes. Bhim Chand, was sort of leader of all those hill chiefs, who on various occasions picked fight with Guru Gobind Singh the Tenth Master of Anand Pur Sahib. The Sikhs sent him and others a message of surrender that was refused by Bhim Chand and his co-horts. In the ensuing battles whole of Bae-Dhaar was subjugated, looted and sikhs amassed a huge amount of wealth and precious articles. Khalsa warriors, now climbed down on to the plains. Thus within a short period, Sikh flag of sovereignty began to sway over vast country from Panipat, Jamuna River, boundary of Lahore to Shivalik foot hills. From Ravi to Jamuna, people in large number became Sikhs and Baptised Khalsa.

Emperor's state of dementia triggered by frustration and wrath further deteriorated and he ordered all Hindus in general and Hindu employees in particular to shave their beards. This absurd edict was aimed at distinguishing between Sikhs and Hindus since Hindus generally supported beards. Bahadur Shah had received information about Banda Bahadur's movements in hilly area. He also was informed of the disturbance created by Majha and Doaba Sikhs. In order to teach them a lesson, he followed the route from Loh Garh via Doaba on way to Lahore. While en-route, Emperor came to know of Munim Khan's death on Feb 28, 1711 A.D.. Although Emperor had tried to console him after rebuke and honoured him with robe of honour and lofty title but Munim Khan's sensitive nature took his humiliation by the Emperor whom he had served so faithfully and valiantly to heart resulting in his death. Emperor genuinely felt sad about Munim Khan's death and was overwhelmed with remorse. With slow marches. Bahadur Shah arrived in Lahore on Aug 11, 1711 A.D.

Although Banda had lost his recent possessions, he was

not disheartened at all. Bravely breaking through enemy's cordon, he disappeared into dense jungle and roamed for some days as hermit (Sanyasi's guise). Barely couple of weeks after Loh Garh debacle, he began writing edicts to the Sikhs for getting ready for upcoming battles. Many Sikhs met him at Kirat Pur Sahib. With a sizable batch he traveled to Pathankot and reemerged on the scene. Emperor's troops were surprised at Banda Bahadur's dare devil spirit and that too soon after crushing loss of Sarhind and Loh Garh.

Seal

Degh-O-Tegh-O Fateh Nusrat Bedrang II

Yafat Az Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh II

Ik Om Kar Fateh Darshan!

It is Lord of Truth's Command. Guru shall protect Sarbat (whole) Khalsa of Jaun Pur. Recite Guru, Guru-your birth, life will be adorned. You are the Khalsa of Sri Akal Purakh (the Immortal Being). Come to us equipped with five weapons as soon as you see this order. Maintain Khalsa's code of conduct. Cannabis (Marijuana), Tobacco, opium, poppy seeds, liquor are prohibited, so are meat, fish and onions. Do not indulge in theft, adultery, We have brought the age of truth & happiness (Satyug). Live with love and harmony. I hereby command, one who keeps Khalsa's way of life, shall be protected by the Guru.

*Dated Poh 12, Sammat Year 1, ten lines-10',
December 26, 1710 A.D.*

In this command-Sachcha Sahib is referred to Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Guru stands for Guru Nanak & Guru Gobind Singh Ji as evident from the seal inscription. All kinds of drugs are prohibited. Meat, fish and onions are prohibited since Banda Singh Bahadur himself was vegetarian. What he experienced as a young hunter long ago, remained, in fact, engraved in his mind whole life.

Mughal officials under Bazid Khan, governor of Jammu and his nephew Shammas Khan were combing the whole country nearby. Near Behram Pur, both parties came face to

face. In a pitched battle Shammas Khān, was killed by Baj Singh. Bazid Khan rushed to help his nephew but was mortally wounded by Fateh Singh and died on way back. This was a morale booster though but not sufficient to challenge the imperial might. Moreover, Banda Bahadur was yet being hotly chased by Hamid Khan Bahadur, Rustam Dil Khan Muhammad & Amin Khan the Mughal Generals.

Frustration and repeated repulses at the hands of scattered, mobile Sikh bands fell too heavy on generals' nerves to bear. Muhammad Amin Khan and Rustam Dil Khan became bitter with each other. Rustam Dil Khan was house arrested. Hindus and Sikhs of Lahore again fell prey to governor's wrath. Emperor himself took leave of all senses and in a fit of stupidity ordered all Hindus to shave their beards and heads. Not only this, dementia took over him so intensely that he ordered all city dogs to be killed and all so called holy men ousted from the city. Bahadur Shah died on Feb 27-28 night, 1712 AD. In the ensuing war of succession, as usual, Jahan Dar Shah came out victorious after wiping out all his family rivals. After this blood bath, he succeeded to the Mughal throne, on the following charge of administration. Zaberdest Khan was appointed the governor of Lahore. It was a fleeting glory though for Jahan Dar Shah was soon afterwards killed along with his Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Khan, in a raid from Farrukh Siyyar, then governor of Bihar & Bangal, aided by two Sayyad brothers. In later days, they attained celebrated notoriety as Sayyad brothers, the kingmaker of Delhi.

Emperor Farrukh Siyyar appointed Sayyad Abdulah as Prime Minister and his brother Hussain Ali, the commander-in-chief of Imperial Army. But the most important appointment of all was the new governor of Lahore. Abdul Sammad Khan with the mandate to capture and kill Banda Singh Bahadur. Banda, on the other hand, rested in Jammu Hills after Behram Pur.¹³

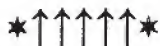
Turmoil of succession gave Banda Singh some relief much needed at the time. From Jammu, he marched toward

13 His place, a beautiful scenic spot is known as Dehra Baba Banda Singh in Riasi.

Chamba state. The rulers Sidh Sain of Mandi and Udai Singh already terrified of Khalsa's name were surrounded. Banda treated them mercifully. Struck with Banda's countenance, Chamba ruler offered to marry his daughter which was accepted with dignity. Soon afterwards, he came back to Sadhaura and Loh Garh. The later once again was proclaimed as the capital of Khalsa Rule. Mughal Generals rushed to Sadhaura. Meanwhile bloody change took place in Delhi in which Farrakh Siyyar became new emperor after having killed Jahandar Shah on Feb 13, 1713 AD. New Governor Abdul Sammad Khan aided by Zainuddin Khan of Sarhind surrounded Sadhaura. The Sikhs inside again gave the invaders a slip. Imperial army now fell upon Loh Garh. After a prolonged battle, they occupied Loh Garh but their target Banda Bahadur was no where around. He had once again escaped to his Jammu retreat.

Although hard pressed, Sikhs in scattered bands kept themselves busy with occasional raids on cruel but rich officials and government supporters. In the mean time, Banda somehow managed to gather around him a sizable Khalsa force and attacked Kalanaur again. Governor Sarbrah Khan fled. Whole district came under Sikhs' sway. Next came the turn of Batala. Within four days whole tract of Riarki (Gurdaspur to foothills) came under Sikh Supermacy.

Banda's second marriage was with a Khatri girl of Wazirabad who gave birth to second son Ranjit Singh. Chamba princess gave birth to Ajay Singh, the first son who was martyred in Delhi along with Sikh warriors.



Chapter 19

Last Stand

Farruakh Siyyar's rage knew no bounds. He issued urgent command of Banda's arrest or death and picked cream of Mughal army under Qamar-ud-din-Khan, son of Itmad-ul-Daula Muhammad Amin Khan to aid Abdul Sammad Khan Daler-i-Jang. Daler-i-Jang lost no time in giving the enemy a taste of Mughal might. In the vicinity of Kot Mirza Jaan, Banda with his camp followers met the invaders in his proverbial way i.e. severe resistance followed by lightening raid and disappearance. Daler-i-Jang, a veteran of many a battle and one of the best commander-governors of the Empire was stunned to have first hand experience in first ever show down with Banda Bahadur. Banda Singh's tactics of war had earned him a magician's fame. In order to ward off Banda's supposed miraculous powers, Abdul Sammad Khan had also enlisted the services of several Holy men to recite verses. Still Banda could do miracles! His appearance or disappearance from the battlefield was so swift, precise- just like a flash that would throw his enemies into disarray. He disappeared from the battlefield after a severe fight much to governor's chagrin and re-appeared in a mud fortress of Gurdas Nangal. It was situated on an ancient mud hill with a moat around. Under the circumstances, this was the most suitable spot Banda could chose to face the enemy on his terms. From military point of view, this place could keep his chasers at bay for indefinite time in which he could find alternatives to save himself, his companions and the nascent kingdom he had once again carved out under the saffron flag.

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This is Gurdas Nangal. More aptly, fortress of Gurdas Nangal situated about four miles westwards from the city of Gurdas Pur and one mile south from village Gurdas Nangal. It was a big dwelling place (haveli) of Duni Chand that looked like more or less a fortress. It was not a regular type fortress even though. Daler-i-Jang surrounded the haveli very

tightly with his own seasoned troops on one side, his son Zakariya Khan on second, Qamar-ud-Din Khan on third and rest of all on the fourth. Despite airtight siege neither Daler-i-Jang, Zakariya Khan, Qamar-ud-Din Khan and others could move an inch closer nor Sikhs from within the fortress could be stopped from making sudden night raids for which they had earned reputation of night raiders.

Especially bhai Binod Singh came to be known as illusionary figure. Priests and holy men accompanying Mughal army would try to convince their generals that Banda's magic had been neutralized by the force of their prayers but the generals would not dare stepping forward. There was panic all around among the besiegers. But there was altogether different picture inside the haveli.

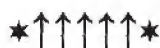
It had been eight months since imperial forces surrounded Gurdas Nangal. Banda's companions offered one of the greatest resistance to one of the mightiest powers of history. But for how long? Human body and mind has so much as to withstand when there was almost no grain of food and very little amount of water for subsistence. Soldiers as well as animals began to die of starvation. Even some of them desperate would go to the extent of eating their own flesh from thighs. There were skeletons all around. Bodily decimated though, their spirit remained undaunted as ever. Banda Singh himself with his wife, Rajput princess ...and four years old child bore all this torment with courage and poise.

The brave and daring deeds of the Sikhs were wonderful. Twice or thrice a day, some forty or fifty of the Sikhs would come out of their enclosure to gather grass for their cattle. When the combined imperial forces, went to oppress them, they (Sikhs) made an end of the Mughals with arrows, muskets and small swords. Then they disappeared. **"Such was the terror of the Sikhs and the Sikh Chief, that the commanders of the besieging armies prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda Singh would seek safety in retreat from the fortress."**

Commanders, in frustration, now planned to use tricks and false promises to induce the inmates. Daler-i-Jang sent solemn word to Banda Singh on Emperor's behalf that if they quit the fortress, they would be given amnesty as also a suitable Jagir. Abdul Sammad Khan also pledged on the Holy Quran to give Banda and his companions a decent treatment and sent some presents as well. The offer of truce did exactly the same that it was meant for. It created rift between Banda and his chief lieutenants whether or not to accept Daler-i-Jang's peace proposal. Hot discussion led to open fight. Binod Singh, the chief opponent of Banda was for accepting the Mughals' offer and was allowed to leave the fortress, which he did and valiantly escaped with his supporters. Finally Banda Singh ordered to open the doors on Dec 17, 1715 AD. Hard pressed by the circumstances they did so. Dalar-i-Jang entered and forgetting all oaths, imprisoned Banda Bahadur.

The offer reminded those kinds of promises and oaths made to Tenth Master Himself during the siege of Anand Pur Sahib years ago.¹⁴

About 300 captives were mercilessly butchered. Rest of 200 in chains, Dalar-i- Jang took to Lahore. The Emperor received the news of conquest of Gurdas Nanagl on Dec 22, 1715 AD. Although Banda was captured, the terror of his name still struck Mughal officers' hearts. One officer said, "Bind me in chains with him When he tried to fly, I will stab him with the dagger."



Chapter 20

Strange Spectacle

14 Kamwar Khan: Tazkara-O-Sulatteen Chughattayan.

After some days Dalar-i Jang's son Zakariya Khan resumed the parade on way to Delhi. In order to make the spectacle fabulous for Emperor's delight, he ordered hundreds more to be arrested. Imperial army entered Lahore in great pomp and show. Crowd of people waited outside the capital city to have the first hand glimpse of living martyr Banda Singh Bahadur. The parade led by musical band consisted of Mughal troops holding 3000 Sikh heads on lances, followed by an elephant with Banda Singh in cage along with two army officers. He was completely bound in shackles, handcuffs, a thick chain around his neck and another tied up with an official's waist. Behind it, 200 Sikh captives bundled on camels and donkeys. They were mere skeletons, but their faces beaming. After them, Imperial generals, army officers, grandies, landlords, Hindu chiefs and their armies. The bazaars, roads and roof tops were lined with spectators. Having marched through Lahore's bazaars, parade ended in the Imperial fort in proper,¹⁵ majestic fashion.

In Delhi

The procession entered Delhi from Lahori gate. Three thousand Sikh heads with long flowing hair on top of bamboo sticks were in the lead. Behind them a cat skeleton symbolizing total wipe out of inmates that not even so much as a cat was spared. Then there was Banda Singh, regally dressed up, in cage on an elephant. A red turban with gold chains around, on his head was meant for mockery of his claim to kingship. An executioner with bare sword stood behind cage. Seven hundred & forty Sikhs, bundled in two on each camel followed Banda Singh. Wooden caps on heads and their faces blackened. Their hands- one forward & one backward were clamped in wood. Banda's notables Generals in sheepskin were walking along his elephant. Behind them were Mughal grandies- Nawab Muhammad Amin Khan Cheen Bahadur, his son Qamar-ud-din Khan and his son-in-

15 Kamwar Khan: Tazkara-O-Sulateen Chughattayan.

law Zakariya Khan. Troops were stationed along roads on both sides. Beyond them the sea of onlookers and crowds of fan fairers.¹⁶

The Muslim writer Muhammad Harisi walked along the procession from 'Salt Market' to 'Royal Fort'. Not a single person wept at it in the whole city. Every body was enjoying the play. Muslims' joy knew no bounds. Those Sikh prisoners also looked happy. There was not a single line of despair or sorrow on their faces. They were reciting Holy verses. If somebody expressed regrets at their plight, they would contentedly say, "This is Wonderful Lord's Will." If someone said, "You will be killed." They answered, "We are not afraid of death. Had we been frightened of dying, why would we have fought so many battles with you? It was hunger that made us weak otherwise you very well know what we are capable of doing?" the procession ended at Red Fort where Banda Singh and his Chief Generals Baj Singh, Fateh Singh etc. were kept under Mir-i-Aatish's surveillance. Remainders 694 were assigned to Sarbrah Khan Kotwal (Police Superintendent) and were ordered to be killed.

The Emperor rewarded Muhammad Amin Khan, Kama-ru-Din Khan and Zakariya Khan with robes of honour. Goods confiscated from Gurdas Nangal deposited by Zakariya Khan in the Royal treasury were as below:

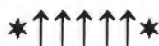
Swords-----	1000
Shields-----	278
Muskets-----	180
Bows and Quivers-----	173
Daggers-----	114
Knives-----	217
Gold Coins-----	23
Rupees-----	600
Gold Ornaments-----	A few.

It is very strange, a few hundred Sikhs with so little ammunition enclosed in a raw fortress could withstand full

16 Ibarat Nameh by Muhammad Harisi.

might of Mughals' Imperial Hindustan for so long. Had the picture been a little bit better with men and ammunition, what would have happened, is any body's guess. Complying with emperor's orders, Sarbrah Khan began systematic killing of the prisoners. On March 05, 1716 A.D., first batch comprising 100 Sikhs was brought onto a platform in front of Kotwali (City Police Head Quarter). Crowds were likewise all around to watch the horrifying scene. Prisoners faced the executioner who had bare, shining sword in his hands. Kotwal read aloud Royal Proclamation, "Prisoners, you have a right to choose between Islam or death. Those who embrace Islam shall be pardoned while others shall be killed."

What a wonderful sight! No one accepted Islam to save life. All, one by one, placed their necks under executioner's sword and embraced death cheerily. Spectators, who were there to see rebel infidels' gruesome ends, now felt remorse and pity for the victims. Such was Sikhs' courage and calm they would even joke with the executioner and thanked him for it was he who would send them to their beloved Guru's heavenly abode. "He is our deliverer." They pointed to the executioner with smile on their bold, battle-scarred faces. Many of the watchers shed silent tears for Banda's companions. Where to see such like remarkable men? they would ask each other.



Chapter 21

Wondrous Drama

This is the slaughterhouse. It is not for killing animals but for the Sikhs—human beings. Humans known as Sikhs are getting killed at the rate full one hundred each day. It is perhaps the last day of the bloody week. Sikh prisoners condemned for death at executioner's hands are lined in a row. Whoever is called—steps forward, says affirmative 'no' to Kotwal's offer of choice between death and Islam, looks around with radiant smile, bids Fateh to his companions and places his neck under executioner's sword. Almost at the end of line something very strange happened. A very young boy about 16 years comes forward. Everyone including Sarbrah Khan and the executioner take a deep breath. "He is too young to die."—They all feel mercy for him. All of a sudden turmoil occurs among the onlookers. An old lady wailing for mercy pushes through the crowd. She is followed by a newly wed bride, her face ashen, eyes bewildered.

"Hold it, who is there?" Sarbrah Khan asks loudly.

"Sir! Here is this boy's mother."

"I have Imperial order in my hands. Please take it." Deeply crying and exhausted, woman handed the Royal order to Kotwal.

Sarbrah Khan read it and said loudly, "Well boy, you are lucky indeed. The Emperor has spared your life. You are free to go."

"Why?" the boy screamed.

"Your mother says you are not a Sikh."

"No—not at all—I am a Sikh. My mother says out of motherly love for me. Kill me. I want to die like my older companions. My heart and soul are with them." The boy looked upon his aged mother and newly wedded bride. it was too much for him not to be moved. But his love for Sikhism was too strong to get wavered. Pitifully he turned his gaze toward the executioner's sword. The heavy sword struck his tender neck. Fountain of blood gushed out. There were sighs of pity and compassion all around. Even Sarbrah Khan could not hold his tears. Such were Banda's companions.

Last Parade

Banda Singh and his noted commanders were subjected to torturous queries particularly about wealth and hidden treasures but to no avail. Finally he was led along with his companions to face the final moment- the moment of horrible death in an ostentatious public procession. On June 02, 1716 AD, Banda was taken out of Red Fort on an elephant. He was dressed up regally with his four years old son Ajay Singh in his lap followed by his commanders, Baj Singh, Ram Singh, Fateh Singh, Bakhshi Gulab Singh¹⁷ also in chains. The procession passed through Delhi lanes, roads and bazaars that presented a *gory* scene of suspended heads, legs, arms of already killed Sikhs. Last stop came in the vicinity of the tomb of Khawaja Qutab-ud-Din Bakhtiar Qaqi by Qutab Minar. Banda was made to sit on ground. Sarbrah Khan read aloud, "Islam or death?" All of Banda's companions accepted death and were beheaded one by one. Their heads supported on lances placed all around Banda Singh who sat cross legged. His serene face a perfect picture of peace and tranquillity without the slightest expression of fear or malice towards his tormentors. Endless crowd of spectators all around him. Prime Minister, Muhammad Amin Khan Itmaduddaula was one among them. He walked up to Banda Singh Bahadur.

"Well Banda Singh, finally we are face to face."

"For the first and last time." Banda smiled.

"I am Itmad-ud-Daula Amin Khan, the the Grand Wazir of the Mughal Empire. I am deeply puzzled though," Prime Minister continued, "How come! A man of your countenance could spill so much blood?"

"Well Prime Minister, when people like you entrusted with the business of ruling and government fail to do justice and start persecuting innocent people, Almighty God raises person like me from among the persecuted to punish the

17 Same Gulab Singh who was captured in Loh Garh fort in place of Banda Singh.

cruel rulers which I did." Banda's answer disarmed Itmad-ud-Daulah.

"Then why are you captured?" he asked nonetheless.

"When we the avengers during punishing process make excesses unknowingly or otherwise, then Almighty takes the rod of justice from us and hands it to persons like you to punish us. This is the play Divine. Dear Itmaduddaula, you and I, we both are watching and people out there are also watching. "Ah! Such a wonderful face and such sagacious ideas." Prime Minister left Banda Singh heavy hearted.

As a matter of fact, entire Delhi, including notables of the Emperor were present there to watch how their greatest foe greeted death, under the shades of Qutab Minar!

Now the executioner with his team of experts turned to Banda Singh.

"Islam or death?" choice was once again turned down boldly.

"Death only." came the answer.

Executioner took lovely flower of four.

"Kill him." he ordered Banda Singh

"No, this is the business of you people." Banda declined.

Furious executioner did himself the ghastly deed.

He killed the innocent boy, cut his body into pieces and threw them right into his father's lap.

His quivering bleeding heart was thrust into Banda's mouth but he remained still unruffled as ever. One of the killing team proceeded further and took one of Banda's eyes out with a sharp knife. Then the other one. Another killer cut his left foot off. Then the right one. Then followed his both hands that were brutally chopped off. Banda was yet unperturbed. His meditative face radiating. Next was the turn of red hot twitchers and squeezers. Deadly weapons tore lumps of flesh off Banda's body who sat cross-legged unflinching. Outraged executioner turned into living monster of death. He took his heavy sword into his hands and struck at Banda Singh constantly. Finally there was no body

remained at all but pieces of flesh, bones and pool of blood scattered all around. Executioner rested to take a breath. Bits of flesh clinging on to his blood drenched sword fell down to ground. Crowds of watchers raised cries, a mixture of sighs and cheers. Sighs from sympathizers and cheers, of course, from his slanderers. This is how Banda Singh Bahadur died a hero's death. Qutab Minar is still there with its lofty minarets in perpetual salute to Banda's memory from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn. Banda gone but the tale of his 'Five Arrows' continues. The torch of freedom, courage and sacrifice kept on burning year after year, century after century.....!



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Chapter 22

Epilogue

Lachhman Das turned Madho Das turned Banda Singh Bahadur vanished physically but not his spirit- that lived throughout later history of the Sikhs when entire community suffered unspeakable and unbearable tortures, persecution and tyranny. Enemy, primarily the rulers of the day combined with religious, political and social detractors of their nascent faith was all out with only one target- total annihilation through the rivers of blood. The Sikhs ultimately came out victorious defeating all their persecutors. Mughals, Iranians and Afghans- one by one by sheer force of faith, spirit and sacrifice. Banda's spirit of total commitment to the cause of the Khalsa, his dash and devotion and ultimate heroic death continued to serve all through the darkest period of their history as light house.

The lamp glows on

After almost half a century i.e. 50 years of fierce struggle of life and death after Banda's death in 1716 AD under Qutab Minar Delhi- Khalsa under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia 'Sultan-ul-Qaum' conquered Lahore and hoisted saffron flag on the ramparts of Royal Fort just like Banda Singh had done on Loh Garh.

Soon afterwards 12 Missals (Principalities) took over vast tract between Ravi, Jamuna and Indus. The Sikh conquests ultimately blossomed into the grand Sikh Empire during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab. It dazzled the world for almost 50 years in first half of 19th century. Not only in person Banda Singh Bahadur served as a role model for future Sikh leaders, generals and rulers He also gave them in legacy the Royal inscription:

*"Degh-O- Tegh-O- Fateh - Nusrat Bedrang II
Yaafat Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh II*

Even today-Edicts issued from all the 'Takhats' of Sikh Panth bear it which contains the Sikh Philosophy in the fullest.



Chapter 23

Notes and References.

State Puncjh-Rajauri Township, Ramdev Father, 27 Oct, 1630 AD, Lachhman Das, - River Tavi—Naasak, Panchwati forest in Nander-Godawari-in 1692 AD---Tantar Vidya, Yog Vidya-- 2 Patthans assassins (Ataulla Khan & Gul Khan)---Five member council (Binod Singh, Fateh Singh, Daya Singh, Baj Singh, Ram Singh)---5 Arrows, Drum, Saffron Flag from Sihri-Khanda, letters to Sikhs.

*Ali Singh, Mali Singh of Salaudi with 23 fighters first to arrive.

*Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharam Singh of Bhai Rupa, Nigahia Singh, Chuharr Singh Dulat, Barra Singh, Ram Singh, Tilok Singh.

• Sonapat.

• Sirkar of Delhi, Saharan Pur, Sarhind, Hisar, Firoz Shah, Kaithal.....royal treasure looterd.

• Sirkar Sarhind had four Dastooors (Districts) Sarhind, Tihara, Thanesar and Samaana—22 Palanquins—Sayyads, Mughals majority population.

*Jalaluddin—Executioner of Guru tegh Bahadur and Shashal Begh & Bashal Begh—Executioners of younger princes—Zorawar Singh & Fateh Singh lived there.

*Samana a rich city ravaged.

*Majhail- Doabia Sikhs in Kirat Pur, Thaska, Shahbad, Mustfabad, Kapuri.

*Sadhaura:- Bodhi Monks' enclave- Sadhaura (Sadhu Bara). Patthans came here. Sayyad Nizamuddin. Sayyad Khizar Khan occupied Delhi.

* Awarded Jagir worth Rs 60,000---

*Ninth descendant Pir Badruddin (Budhu Shah) - Sayyads, Qazis, Sheikhs. Usman Khan governor had killed Budhu Shah for the later had helped Tenth Master in Bhangaani battle--Usman khan killed.

*Mukhlis Garh—Loh Garh —Sucha Nand's nephew goes to Banda Singh---1000 mercenaries with him.

*Ambala, Ropar subjugated Sher Muhammad Khan--- Khawaja Khizar Khan, Khawaja Mardud of Zafar Nameh.

*Associated with Lord Ram Chandra- Vishnu's incarnation according to Hindu belief.

* Sirkar equivalent to modern day commissioner.

• Khafi Khan -10,000 Musalmaans massacred--- looters did their job quite well. Banda Singh's first real victory.

• Fateh Singh- Faujdaar (police-military officer)

• Khizar Khan killed, Sher Muhammad escaped with dead body of his brother—Banur, Chhat conquered by Banda Singh.

• **Chhaparr-Jhirri* (Chapar-chirri) (May 22, 1710 AD)-- 10-12 miles from Sarhind, equivalent to Panipat- first battle between Babar & Ibrahim Lodhi.

• Khafi Khan.

• **Wazir Khan's troops:-** 20,000 regular army plus 5,000 zealous crusaders—Sher Muhammad Khan of Malerkotla on right flank. Khwaja Ali—crusaders on left. In the middle, Governor Wazir Khan with special force. Up front - guns-Jamburas- rehklas (small light guns), behind them a long row of elephants- next were arrowshooters, matchlockmen & lancers.

• **Banda's forces and battle plan**

Almost same number but no regular trained troops. Several thousand looters. Ammunition deficiency - no guns big or small, matchlock shortage. very few horses, bows, arrows, lances, swords, rods or axes.

1. Malwais under Fateh Singh with Karam Singh, Dharam Singh, Ali Singh, Mali Singh.

2. Majhails under Baj Singh (Bal Jat of Mir Pur) with Binod Singh, Ram Singh, Sham Singh.

3. Banda Singh in his hillock headquarters.

City of Sarhind:-

Very old city. Subordinate to Samaana. Feroze Shah

Tughlak populated it. On G.T. Road, it developed rapidly. During Mughal rule it became 'Sarkar' with 28 Parganas including Samaana. Mughals on way to Punjab, Kashmir stayed here. Palaces, parks, gardens, resorts, learned scholars, rich people lived there. In between Delhi and Lahore, it was sort of mega city. Banda ordered general massacre. After four days massacre stopped. Khalsa rule declared. Saffron Flag at the place of Sahibzadas, Martyrdom. Baj Singh governor of Sarhind. Banda Singh held court in Royal fort to do justice. Sucha Nand were duly punished. (Eye for eye)

- Sahibzada Zorawar Singh 7 Years, 11 months and 8 days Sahibzada Fateh Singh 5 Years, 10 months and 10 days -- -Dec 27, 1704 AD Bricked alive in Sarhind.

- Sunaam, Kaithal, Raikot made offerings.

Mukhlis Garh:-

- For a kingdom or political state- country, capital flag, army, king (or head of state), currency and seal (stamp) are essential requirements.

- **Loh Garh (Capital)**—Mukhlis Garh began to be built during Salim Shah's reign. He was Sher Shah Suri's son. Ordered a hunting castle to be built. One of his officials Mukhlis Khan got the castle and royal palaces built – that were named after him- Mukhlis Garh. Shah Jahan would come here for hunting. The fort was located 8-9 miles from Sadhaura in hilly corner. Banda took it and renamed 'Loh Garh'. Nowa days in ruins, The Loh Garh was on the top of a high ridge with two rivulets on both sides.

- Banda circulated 'Fateh Darshan'- his new war cry but it was not accepted by traditional Sikhs. So it was dropped.

- Sikhs' awe-----Irwin, Later Mughals.:

'Some body of very low status in a village got baptisad, joined a Sikh band, on his return, had had appointment letter of authority by Banda. He would be treated with utmost regard by the highest of the place'.

- Between Satluj & Jamuna & beyond: Unarsa, Saharan Pur (Delhi's Sirkar with 28 Parganas). Behuta, Jalalabad's Jalal

Khan...Ambeta, Nanauta, ravaged by Singhs.

• Jalal Khan an Afghan noble:- Banda put city under siege. Monsoon set in. Banda was getting daily messages of urgency from Punjab. So Banda took siege off; crossed Jamuna and fell upon Karnal. All area upto Panipat over taken by Banda's forces. Ram Singh, Binod Singh appointed rulers.

• Asf-ud-Daula Asad Khan writes urgent letter to Emperor Bahadur Shah in Deccan.

• From Lahore to Panipat and upto Pathankot in foothills.

• Banda's Date of Birth-27 October, 1670 A.D.
Godavari 1692 A.D.

• Rattan Singh Bhangu-(Pracheen Panth Parkash):

Fulfills people's desires!

Poot Mangepa TinDwaye Poot. Maya De Doodh Behut.

Waheguru Da Jaap Japaawai ||

Ik Mohar Tih Dewai mell||

Mohar Kheesiyoon Dewai soi.

Prayers for needy:- Mohars for poor, servants, workers.

• October 07, 1708 A.D.--Guru Gobind Singh left for heavenly abode in Nander.

{Babe Ke Babar Ke dou, Aap kiye Parmeshar sou}

(Dasam Granth)

• Mughal Dynasty

Akbar to Bahadur Shah

Babar conquered Hindustan. First battle of Panipat. Abrahim Lodhi was defeated by Babar in 1526 A.D.¹⁸ His grandson Akbar (Humayun's son) consolidated it. He became the Emperor of Delhi.

Humayun defeated by Sher Shah Suri Afghan (known as predecessor of Akbar) for policies formulated by Sher Shah Suri were mainly adopted by Akbar. Sher Shah's successor failed to prove his worth. Humayun came from Iran and took India again only for six months. He died in

18 Mughal--Parthanan Bhaiye Larail (Guru Nanak, pp 418, Shri Guru Granth Sahib)

Delhi climbing down the stairs of his library.¹⁹

Akbar popular as Mughal-e-Azam (The Great mughal) was crowned in Kalanaur, Gurdas Pur, Punjab. His long reign known for peace, religious tolerance, harmony, prosperity.²⁰ Prince Salim revolted twice against his father but was subjugated. On Akbar's death, Salim acceded to the throne as Nur-ud-Din Jahangir. He was a strange character. Tall, handsome, funloving, and given to literary art and poetry. On the other hand, he was very stern and cruel ruler. During his reign, Fifth Sikh Guru Arjun Dev was brutally done to death by 'Yasa'. Emperor himself makes confession in his famous auto-biography—"Tauzak-i-Jahangir" in Turkish.²¹ Prince Khusro, rebelled against Jahangir, was captured and cruelly treated. Khurrām as Shah Jahaan succeeded Jahangir by eliminating all his rivals and claimants to the throne. Shah Jahan famous for 'Taj Mahal' was a great builder but weak administrator. When he fell sick, all his four sons- Dara Shikoh, Aurangzeb, Shuja and Muraad started war of succession in which Aurangzeb came out victorious. Keeping with family tradition, he eliminated all his brothers. Long reign, largest empire. cunning, tyrant, heartless, responsible for downfall of Mughal Empire. He ordered ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur's head cut off in Chandni Chowk delhi in 1675 A.D.

• (Emperor to Prince Azam "The instant which passed in power, has left only sorrow behind it. I have not been the guardian and protector of the empire.....")

• To Prince Kam Bakhsh, "I carry with me the fruits of my sins and imperfections....."

He had to deal with Tenth Guru & his Khalsa as well as Shiva Ji Marhatta in south. On his death, his sons fell out for

19 Humanyun (Nasiruddin) kept tumbling in his life and finally was tumbled out by fate.

20 Once Emperor wanted to know how rich Hindustan was. He ordered gold and silver to be weighed. It took six months for the government officials to cover only two cities Delhi and Agra.

21 Babar was also a keen observer as proven by his auto-biography 'Tauzak-i-Babri' in Turkish.

the crown in which eldest Prince Muazzam succeeded eliminating all his brothers. In the war of succession, he is said by historians to have sought and received Guru Gobind Singh's assistance. Bhai Nand Lal, a great scholar and poet of Persian served as the man-go-between the two. Muazzam took the title of Bahadur Shah. He had to face Banda Singh Bahadur. Old, inexperienced, Bahadur Shah soon lost his senses and came to be known a Shah-i-Bekhabar²² (Ignorant king). Bahadur Shah's sons in their turn fought with each other for the crown.

Jahandar Shah:- After almost a year, Jahandar Shah. was killed by Farrukh Siyyar, his nephew (Azim Shah's son).

- Rise of Sayyad brothers: Jahandar Shah's Prime Minister Zulfikar Khan. Farrukh Siyyar appointed Abdula as Prime Minister and Hussain Ali, the Commander-in-Chief.

- Banda Singh Bahadur captured and mercilessly slaughtered in Delhi.

- Khooni Darwaza (Bloody Gate) near Delhi Gate.

- *Muhammad Quasim, a contemporary Musalmaan says, 'Such was the terror of the Sikhs and the fear of the sorceries of the Sikh Chief that the commanders of the army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should seek safety in his flight from the fortress*

A Mughal Noble (Presumably Prime Minister Muhammad Amin Khan), interviewed Banda before his killing started and stated, "It is surprising that one who shows so much robility in his conduct should have been guilty of such horrors."

Banda replied, "Whenever men become so corrupt & wicked so as to relinquish the path of equity (justice) and abandon themselves to all kinds of excess then Providence never fails to raise up a scourge like me to chastise a race so depraved but when the measure of punishment is full, then he raises up men like you to

22 Bhai Nand Lal served as Chief Secretary to Prince Muazzam as governor of Kabul and later of Punjab.

bring him to punishment.”

Coin one side:-

The power of the sword granted by Guru Nanak won the two worlds. Guru Gobind Singh-the King of the Kings- always victorious by the Grace of the True Lord.

Other Side:-

Issued from the beautiful capital of Good Fortune, a place of peace and joy for the world.

Seal:-

May victory be achieved in nourishing the forsaken and annihilating the wicked with the imminent grace of Guru Nanak & Guru Gobind Singh. May the Immortal God be the Constant Helper!

↑↑↑↑↑

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